







Chapter 1: Rabbit and Chicken

This might be a bit sudden, but have you ever seen a romcom? It can be in an anime, a drama, or a novel even. In my case, the first time I read a romcom was a shoujo manga I borrowed from my little sister. Of course, it's not that I willingly read her manga or anything. Instead, when I was a brat, I could never go against my little sister.

Despite being brother and sister, despite being related by blood, there was a rift between us as deep as the Mariana trench. My classmates always voice their doubt about us even being siblings in the first place, but that's probably because they don't know much about her.

Well, deep down, she's a good girl, and I guess that she just watched too many midnight anime or read too much sibling stuff. After all, despite being a young girl, she loved shounen manga, and whenever she barged into my room, she would borrow all sorts of manga from me, saying 'What's Onii-chan's is mine as well!'...No, she pretty much stole it.

Naturally, that being repeated over and over, it would warrant for a rebellion or a coup d'état, but the me back then didn't have the strength for that. Any half-baked resistance would be crushed. That is the iron rule of our Sakamachi Family. The weak devour the strong. My family environment pretty much was still stuck in the Jura age, creating cruel circumstances for me, who was weak.

That's why, the best I could do was sneak into my little sister's room like some rat, and steal the shoujo manga she had. Thinking about it now, I totally did it out of spite. Of course, my tyrant little sister immediately caught on to that, and brought down death penalty as my punishment. Sadly, this is the status in my family. Put frankly, I'm an endangered species about to go extinct. I'm like a lake ball trying to survive in Lake Akan.

This being the case, the first romcom I read was a shoujo manga I stole from my little sister. And, it was quite the orthodox romcom, with the girl bumping into the protagonist at a crossing with toast in

her mouth, all of this within the first four pages. I still remember thinking ‘This is popular nowadays?’.

But, let’s move on to the main topic. The reason I’m talking about this—is the fact that such an orthodox romcom development happened to me. The time of year was the end of June. That hellish Golden Week ended, and as the asphalt sizzled from the early-summer sunshine—only a few days away until the important school festival—the entire school was living in excitement towards that upcoming summer break. This happened on a certain day.

Without any warning or preamble, I bumped into a girl on my way to school. Of course, this happened at a crossroad, and of course she had toast in her mouth—not to mention that she was actually pretty cute. Normally, one would be happy about this, right? This might just signal the beginning of a wonderful new love, or some nonsense that only happens in the world of 2D, but you could at least hope, right?

However, there was one giant problem about this. That girl...wasn’t walking to school. She was using a motorbike, and ran me over on my way to school.

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“Kyaaaaa! Out of the waaaaay!”

Together with a loud shriek like that, my body soared through the sky. It was a traffic accident you could see everywhere. Not to mention that it involved a human body instead of another car.

As I was on my way to school, right at a crossroad in the living district, a rampaging motorbike sent my body flying.

“Gobuha!?” I let out a groan resembling a frog being crushed, and rolled along the asphalt like a bowling pin.

I mean, I didn’t act like a comedian during a live show on purpose. I just reflexively tried to soften the impact. After that, I raised my body, aching with pain.

“Urk...”

Ahh, that hurt. I seriously thought I was going to die. I confirmed the damage inflicted on my body. Seems like I got off with some light grazes. I go through worse every single morning thanks to Kureha's practice. I really don't want to suffer any needless injuries. Also, why does the handicrafts club need to do morning practice?

Well, I guess I'm pretty lucky to get away with these mild injuries after being run over. With these thoughts, I stood on both of my legs. What a sturdy body I have. I guess this is what I get for living through my hellish family environment. Thankfully I can get through this without another hospital visit...

"...Huh?"

Just when I thought that something was off, I realized that I lost my glasses. Did they fly off because of that impact just now? It's not like my eyesight was exceptionally bad, but without a spare pair, it'd be pretty troublesome. I looked around in search of my glasses. There, I realized that this incident had become pretty big. I could see the bike flipped over in the corner of the crossroad, together with the toast, and—

"...Crap."

The second I saw that, I subconsciously let out a groan. In the middle of this crossing, with arms and legs wide open, laid a girl wearing a familiar uniform.

"....."

This is bad. She looks like she's on her deathbed...! With this hellish scene in front of me, I wanted to just walk away. Not to mention that her skirt got flipped up because of the accident, letting me see her slender yet plump thighs...This is seriously bad.

"...Um, hello?" I tried my best to not look where I shouldn't be, and waited for a response.

However, as silence followed, I was getting close to giving up. That being said, I can't leave her alone either. Not like the scene is secured either.

“...Alright.” I carefully approached my ears to her face, trying to check if she was still breathing.

However, it was hard to tell. Hence, I instead moved on to check her pulse with my hand on her neck. Waah, so warm. When I touched her soft skin, I could feel her heart beating even up to my fingers. Thank god, she’s still alive. I sighed in relief, but it’s not like I could keep touching that girl forever.

Otherwise, my gynophobia will activate. That’s right, this gynophobia of mine is another result of my twisted family environment. Touching or being touched by a girl could literally kill me. If I stay too close to a girl for too long, my nose will start bleeding.

“...Hm?” I slapped my cheeks to get back to my senses, when I looked at the girl again, and realized.

Somehow...this girl is hella cute, isn’t she? She had styled her wavy hair in two long twintails. Adding to her lively impression through her hairstyle, she had faint crimson colored lips, with long eyelashes. She was about the average size of a girl her age, about in the middle of Suzutsuki and Konoe. Her physique lets me guess that she’s the sporty type of girl. The same image was seen on her slender legs, covered by about knee-high long socks. Mm...the gap between the wild design and uniform is just...

“Mguh...”

“Woah!?”

When a faint breath escaped the girl’s lips, I subconsciously jumped backwards. Right after, the girl’s eyes opened. She possessed lifted eyes, resembling a cat’s. Just from looking at her, she seemed pretty strong. After blinking a few times, the girl raised her body.

“Hm...I...ouch...”

“Hey, you okay?”

From the looks of it, she wasn’t injured in any way, but I was worried that she might have hit her head. After all, her helmet landed in the corner of the crossing as well.

“Y-Yeah...I’m fine...” She spoke that far, only to suddenly end up silent.

...? I wonder why she’s looking so awkward while being silent. Maybe she’s hurt after all? The silence continued for a few more seconds.

“Oh no...that person must have died for sure...”

I was about to let out a shocked ‘What?’ in the face of that reaction. She completely ignored me, and continued with a heavy tone in her voice.

“I...hit that person...What should I do...I need to call 110 right now...”

“.....”

Oh my goodness, that girl thinks she killed me in that accident. Well, at least she’s properly worried about me. I guess despite her fierce outer appearance, she’s kind where it counts.

“I need to create a cover-up...Need to erase all the evidence before the cops come here...”

I take back what I said. This girl might have a cute face, but most definitely is pure evil. She thinks she hit some passersby. Maybe she really hit her head after all? Or she’s panicking. Either way, you should probably call 119 over 110. But, I should probably clear up the misunderstanding before that.

“Don’t think you need to worry about that.”

Hearing my words, the girl let out a confused ‘Eh?’, and rubbed her eyes one more time. After confirming her surroundings, she looked at me again.

“.....!?” Immediately after, she grew pale.

She showed a frozen expression like she just saw a ghost. Her mouth opened and closed like a koi fish waiting to be fed, and her facial color changed like a traffic light to deep blue. In the midst of all of

that, she let out groans along the lines of ‘Ah...ah, ah...’

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!” She let out a scream like she encountered an exhibitionist in the middle of the street.

Of course, we were still in the middle of the residential district..... Not good. I might have just worsened the situation. What if she caused a panic here? The neighbours would think I tried to assault her, and arrest me.

“C-Calm down. I’m not some ghost.” I called out to her in an attempt to clear up the misunderstanding.

As a result of that, the girl moved backwards to the wall of the street, letting out another shriek as she sank to the floor.

“Nooooo don’t come any closer! Monster! You monster!”

“Hey! Why do you have to be so cruel about this!”

Why do I have to be called a monster by someone I only just met. Also, my Mom or little sister are even more of a monster than me, alright.

“How? Why are you alive? I ran you over at full speed...”

“So you were aware of it...”

“I was planning on stepping on the brakes, but mistook them for the gas pedal.”

“Makes sense why I couldn’t hear the sounds of any brakes when you hit me!”

Was she actually planning on killing me from the very start? Did someone record this by any chance, so that I can use this as evidence in court? Then again, it’s crazy how I managed to get out of this with barely any injuries. Maybe training my body recently was the right decision after all. Ever since that incident during Golden Week, I’ve been regularly training with Kureha and Konoe in that underground arena.

It's been a while since I was training this much after Mom left, so I guess I was getting back a lot of endurance. Of course, I still always lose against my sparring partner.

"What the hell is going on with your body? Are you actually human?"

"You're pretty rude, huh. My body's just a bit more robust than the average person's."

"Robust?"

"Yeah, I was run over by a truck last month, but was discharged from the hospital three days later."

"....." She narrowed her eyes with a dubious gaze.

.....Hey now, what's that reaction for. Don't look at me like I'm some alien.

"...So, what's your name?"

I mean, if she was forced into an ambulance, I at least should know her name. Also, in case we need to take this to court as well.

"...Eh?" However, the girl awkwardly averted her eyes at my question. "W-Why would you ask for that?"

"...? I mean, we at least should know our names, right? Is that such a problem? Not to mention that you're from Rouran as well, looking at your uniform."

".....~~~!" She let out an awkward groan.

Following that, she unwillingly moved her plump lips...

"...Yamada."

"Huh?"

"Yamada. That's my family name."

"...Huh. So, what about your given name?"

“Lucy.”

“Lucy Yamada!?”

“What’s your problem? It’s a good name, right?” She let out a confident breath, and glared up at me.

Lucy Yamada, huh...Yeah, that’s gotta be fake. There’s no Japanese person who has such a cool name. Clearly, she doesn’t believe me at all. Was I acting that suspicious? I feel like she’s needlessly careful around people, almost like a wild rabbit.

“Come on, you hit me with your bike, I think I at least deserve that.”

“It’s your fault for not dodging. Also, can you stop with the whole ‘You you you’ already?”

“Then tell me your real name.”

“Don’t wanna!”

“Then, what year are you in? That should be enough to tell me, right?”

“...Second. What about you? I won’t forgive you if you’re beneath me.”

“What a shame, I’m a second-year student as well. Though we seem to be in different classes.”

I would have realized if she was a classmate of mine. Our school has a lot of students after all, so I guess we really never even walked past each other. But, then...

“...Hm?”

The girl sat on the ground, her back to the concrete wall. Between her thighs I could see something all too familiar...Wait, those are my glasses.

“H-Hey...where are you looking!” She started blushing furiously, and pulled down her skirt.

As a result of that, the glasses escaped deeper into her skirt. Not to mention at a position that was hard to point out. Hmm, this ain't good. She might step on them by accident. I really need them, so I can't allow that to happen.

"W-What? Why are you staring at my skirt?"

"Well, something important to me is inside there..."

"Something important!?" The girl once again pulled down her skirt, and blushed even harder.

Hey now, I wasn't lying. You're protecting my one and only pair of glasses there.

"Y-You...What are you saying in the middle of the residential district..."

Hm? I mean, I want what's inside your skirt."

"Wha..."

"But, it's hard for me to get, so could you grab it for me?"

"You're telling me to take it off and give it to you!?"

"That's right. Are you telling me to get it?"

I mean, as she said, we're in the middle of the residential district. Are you telling me to stuff my hand in a girl's skirt like this?

"B...B-But, even if you suddenly ask me that, I can't..."

"What's the problem? Should be easy, right?"

"Wha...easy...!?"

"Yeah, really easy. Even a kindergartener could do it."

"You made a kindergartener do that!?" She screamed with an expression like she had seen the devil reincarnated.

What's the big deal? There was a time I was too nervous about high

school exams, and forgot my glasses, so Kureha had to bring them for me. If my little sister can do it, then a kindergarten child can do it even better.

“I mean, never had a kindergartner do it, but my little sister already did it before.”

“Wha...”

“She put them in her pocket, and brought them to the interview at the high school I was applying at.”

“Interview...high school...why there?”

“Eh? Because I need them for the interview??”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah, I can’t live without them. It’s much better than any good luck charm.”

“So...you gave that to the interviewer?”

“Huh? Why would I do that?”

What an awful bribe that would be. Of course, what I did...

“I put them on?”

“You put them on!?”

“Thanks to that, everything worked out.”

“That clearly should not have worked out!?”

“The interviewer even said ‘Where do they sell these? I want a pair myself’, you know...”

“Nooooooooooooooooo!?”

“Anyway, I was really thankful to my little sister back then.”

“...B-But, she must have hated the idea of bringing that to you,

right...”

“Maybe? I think she started blushing with a ‘I was really embarrassed while bringing that here, you know’, or something along those lines.”

“Of course she’d start blushiiiiing!” She threw in a sharp retort.

What a wonderful retort that was. But, why? Kureha simply said ‘It’s embarrassing to come here when I’m not even taking the exam myself’.

“But, she forgave me with one piece of Garigari-kun.”

“With just that?!”

“Hm? You also want a Garigari-kun or something?”

“I-I don’t! I really don’t!”

“Alright then. Anyway, I got run over by you, right, so giving me them would be the least thing to do...But, if you’re that against it, I can just grab them myself, I guess.”

“~~~!” She started blushing all the way up to her ears, as tears formed in her eyes.

After another brief silence, seeming like she had accepted her fate, she reached for the inside of her skirt with quivering fingers...



“—I can’t...”

Right as she grabbed the hem of her skirt, she put down her hand. Why is this such a big deal? I was feeling a bit annoyed, when she continued with a meek voice.

“That’s why...you do it.”

“Wha?”

“I said you do it. I can’t...” She averted her gaze, visibly embarrassed.

.....Um, what is this about? Just to make sure, I confirmed our surroundings. Luckily, only a cat was watching us.

“A-Are you sure? You’re not going to ask for money later?”

“Y-Yeah. Just hurry up and do it.”

F-For now, let me confirm the situation. Sitting in front of me was a girl. She’s wearing Rouran Academy’s uniform, with a pleated skirt. Her plump thighs created a small gap...

“.....!”

C-Calm down me. What’s important is to get back the glasses. I most definitely am not thinking about anything lewd. In my head, the Indiana Jones theme was playing, as my hand approached the inside of the skirt.

“Bueh!?”

An impact shook my body. I was kicked, not to mention quite fiercely. The girl’s right leg had stabbed directly into my stomach.

“You...you, what was that for...”

That woman kicked me right in my solar plexus. Not to mention with the heel of her long boots. If I was just your run-of-the-mill guy, I would have collapsed immediately.

“Shut up, pervert! I was just playing with you! I was waiting for you to get closer so I could kick you, you never realized!? Who would let you take them off!”

“Take them off? What are you talking about? I only wanted...”

“S-Shut up! Die! Get kicked to death by me!”

“Hey, will you calm down alrea...Wah!?”

A barrage of kicks flew my way, fast enough to cut through the air. Those are some sharp kicks alright, is she actually using some martial arts skill?

“Cry! Scream! And then, die!”

“Gah, just calm down already! You’ll crush my glasses at this rate!”

While dodging the kick that aimed directly at my face, I picked up the glasses on the ground...That was careful, she almost destroyed my precious glasses.

“...The hell is that?”

I heard a dumbfounded voice. Looking over, the girl stared at me and my glasses in shock.

“Don’t tell me, that’s what you’ve been wanting this entire time?”

“Hey now...that’s what I’ve been telling you. What did you think I was talking about anyway?”

“Urk...” The girl blushed again, and pulled down her skirt.

Just what is that girl imagining...Also, it’s annoying that I don’t know her name.

“...Can’t help it.”

Guess I have to be the one to introduce myself first. I let out a sigh, and slowly put on my glasses. Right after...

“—Ah.”

For some reason, the girl pointed at me and my glasses, her expression once again different from before. It’s like she ran into someone she knew in the center of town.

“...? What, you know me or something?”

Since I always keep on my glasses at school, she probably couldn’t recognize me without them. Not to mention that she probably is still

under a bit of a shock after having run me over like that.

“...Yep, I sure do...Really, why did I not realize.”

It happened in the blink of an eye.

“!?”

Another kick flew my way. Not to mention a very aggressive high kick. Her right leg shot towards me, perfectly landing on my jaw.

“Gah...!?”

Like the strings had been cut, I lost all strength in my hips.

“.....!”

...Ho crap. Pink. I saw pink. That cherry blossom pink-colored fabric had an adorable ribbon on it.

“.....”

...No, wait a second. This isn't what you think it is. It's not that I'm shocked to see her wear such cutesy underwear or anything, I actually had plenty enough time to dodge that attack, but this peek of what I shouldn't be seeing just robbed all my focus from me, which is why I couldn't evade that kick.

“...Wait, this isn't the time to explain myself!” I retorted on my own stupidity, and fell backwards on staggering legs.

My field of view shook, as the impact pulled on my fading consciousness. And yet again I have to emphasize, this is all because of her kick, and most definitely not because I saw her panties.

“Huh. That was pretty easy. I expected a bit more from her Onii-chan.”

“...Wha?”

Onii-chan? Does she...know Kureha? I tried my best to ask this question out loud, only to find that high boot stomping right onto my

abdomen as I had fallen backwards on the ground.

“Guho!?”

All the air was pushed out of my stomach...Not good. This isn't just some joke, I will actually die. Not to mention that in this position, I could barely not look inside her skirt. Instead, I got a perfect view of her slender leg covered by the boot, and...Wait, what am I thinking in this situation...!

“Really...it's unbelievable. How did you...” While grinding her foot on me, the girl spoke with a cold tone.

I could feel clear hate. And then...

“—Hey, tell me.” She gave me a doubtful gaze, as she looked down at me in disgust. “How did you...become friends with Subaru-sama?”

“Y-You...”

Who are you? As I was having this doubt fill my head, she had her twintails shake, and answered me.

“Fine, I'll be kind enough to tell you. My name is—Usami.”

“...Usagi¹?”

“...! U-S-A-M-I! Not Usagi! I'm not some rabbit!” She put more strength into her heel.

Urk...I can't breathe. How could this happen...She's going to awaken some weird new fetish inside of me at this rate.

“I'll tell you again, so listen carefully. My name is...” The girl...No, Usami opened her mouth one more time. “Usami Masamune, a second year at Rouran Academy and a member of the handicrafts club.”

“.....”

Let me start from the conclusion. The handicrafts club at our school really isn't normal.

I saw the boot in my view, the heel floating in the air. Right as that came soaring down on my solar plexus again, those were my thoughts.

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“Gyaaaaah!”

My consciousness returned. The second my eyes opened, my upper body shot up.

“...Ouch.”

A severe pain assaulted my stomach. When I pulled up my shirt... Wow, so many bruises. When I look at all these injuries, I can only accept that previous scenery as reality, and not just some nightmare.

“Damn it, that girl...”

Usagi...No, Usami Masamune, was it. That damn wench, stepping on me like she wanted to turn grapes into wine. Thanks to that, I almost got to meet my maker.

“...Jeez.” I let out a sigh in order to calm myself down.

More importantly...where is this? I was unsure where to find myself, and looked around...

“Jirou...are you okay?” An anxious alto voice reached my ears.

I directed my gaze towards the source of the voice, and found the face of a beautiful and handsome boy, possessing the facial features of an antique doll. On top of that, she wore tight pants with a waist, even a tight tailcoat on top of that. It's a different uniform from what you would normally see at our school—namely, a butler's uniform.

She is Konoe Subaru, the personal **male** butler of Suzutsuki Kanade, who is the single daughter of this school's board chairman. The students call her 'Subaru-sama' like a prince. And right now, this very prince sat next to my bed on a chair, giving me a worried gaze.

“Konoe? Um, this is...”

“The infirmary.” Konoe responded with a calm voice.

Yeah, now that she mentions it, all these shelves with medicine and those two white beds, as well as that distinct scent of antiseptic solution. This definitely is the infirmary at our school. But, why am I here?

“I was shocked. When I walked to school, I found you collapsed at the side of the road. Leaving you there out cold would have been too cruel, so I carried you here.”

Ahh, I see. It seems like that Usami girl grinded me with her boot so much that I lost consciousness. Not like that doesn’t sound fishy at all.

“Jirou, were you run over by a car or something? I saw parts of a car close to you on the ground, so...”

“Well, something like that. I got hit badly, so I just lost consciousness...”

Well, it was a traffic accident. Can’t tell her that I got kicked by a girl to the point where I blacked out, though. I don’t have that kind of fetish.

“Sorry that you had to carry me all the way over here. But, I’m not hurt or anything from how things look. You know how tough my body is, right?”

“...Yeah. That’s fine and all...” Konoe awkwardly averted her gaze from me.

Hm? I feel like she’s acting a bit weird today. Normally, she’d have more of a sour look on her face. It’s almost like she’s super worried about me?

“...Say, Jirou, can I ask one thing?” Konoe seemed to have made up her mind, and opened her mouth. “When you were sleeping, you were screaming things like ‘Please forgive me, my Queeeeen!’...”

“!”

“Also, I heard something like ‘If you grind on me any more with that, you will open a dangerous door for meee!’, what’s that about?”

“.....”

“In the end, you were just begging, saying ‘20.000 yen! I’ll give you 20.000 yen so please forgive me! Ah, urk, no moreeee...’. On top of that...”

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!” I frantically interrupted Konoe’s words.

...Wow, it seems like I took more psychological damage from this incident than physical damage.

“I-It’s fine, I just had a nightmare is all.”

“Really? It looked like you were possessed by some evil spirit or whatever...”

“Don’t worry. I tend to have more nightmares lately.”

“You do!? Are you sure you’re not suffering from some mental sickness!?”

“No problems. I definitely did not awaken to some weird fetish like that.”

“...Hmm, well if you say so...The thing is, there was a bit of an incident in the residential district today.”

“An incident?”

Konoe nodded, and continued with a serious expression.

“Apparently, a girl was molested on the way to school.”

Immediately after I heard that, my back started to grow damp from the sweat. Those damn neighbours actually reported that!

“It caused quite a ruckus. A housewife nearby heard a girl’s screams, followed by a boy and a girl fighting.”

“H-Huh...that sounds rough...”

“I felt like this wasn’t related to you, so I brought you here, but...that was the right choice, wasn’t it?”

“Of course! There’s no way I’d put my hand into a girl’s skirt, you know!”

In my head, I was already thinking about how to change my route from and to school. I best avoid that part of the residential district for a while. There’s a high chance that place is crawling with police by now.

“More importantly, where’s Suzutsuki? She’s not with you?”

I tried to avoid the topic all-together, so I chose the best method. Konoe is heading to school with me as a means of observing me, but that wasn’t the case this morning. Then, that must mean Suzutsuki came to school with Konoe. Though, they probably got driven here.

“I came to look after you, but the young lady is still in class. Though, the first period is about to end.”

“Really. Well, I didn’t want to skip class, but at least Suzutsuki isn’t here, so it’s fine.”

I feel like our nurse Nakamoto-sensei isn’t here either right now, but she must be off to the staff office or something. As for the first period, I can just have Kurose show me his notes later...Well, if his handwriting is sufficable.

“...Hmpf.” I heard a displeased voice.

Looking over, Konoe had narrowed her eyebrows, giving me a dubious glance.

“Jirou, I’ve been wondering about this for a while, but...aren’t you avoiding the young lady a bit too much as of late?”

Twitch.

“I think it started right after Golden Week ended.”

Twitch.

“Ever since then, you started declining any kind of healing program that the young lady came up with, saying you had other plans or whatever. But, it’s not just that. You also tried to evade the young lady when you’re at school. Did something happen between the two of you?” When Konoe asked that question, her eyes narrowed.

In short, she’s not wrong. In reality, I have been avoiding Suzutsuki.

‘Sorry, I need to prepare to watch anime all night!’ I said, using a really weak excuse to avoid any recent treatment for my gynophobia. The cause of everything is the incident on the final day of Golden Week. After all, Suzutsuki Kanade—stole my first kiss.

“

...This is bad. Just remembering it makes me feel depressed. T-To think my first kiss had to be with that wench of a rich lady...Honestly speaking, it weighed me down quite a bit. No matter how I try to forget about it, there comes a time when I’m being reminded of the ending theme of Ki*eretsu Daihyakka². It’s just a hallucination. But, it’s probably just a matter of time until some robot appears in front of me.

What’s worse than having my first kiss stolen...is that it had to be by Suzutsuki Kanade of all people. She definitely enjoyed making me suffer. I mean, I was giving it some thought, assuming that she might have a thing for me and all, but...that’s impossible. We’re talking about **that** Suzutsuki, you know.

She commits crime for fun. She must be having fun watching me suffer like that. And, I still think that this is going too far. An actual kiss just to torture me? You rich people have no worries at all, huh.

But...even I think that there’s a limit reached here. I can’t avoid her forever. That’s why, I’d like to think of some countermeasures, but...

“If there’s anything you’re having trouble with, I don’t mind listening.” Konoe must have guessed what I was thinking, and offered a helping hand. “After all, Jirou and I...are friends, right? Friends listen to each other’s problems.”

“Konoe...”

Man, she’s such a good person. Completely different from her master. My friend! Lend me your strength!

“But, I do have one condition.”

However, as if to betray my thoughts, the butler said with a natural tone.

“You have to listen to a request of mine.”

“...Hmm.”

So that’s how we’re doing things. That’s a bit unexpected. I thought that kind of thing was only a strength of Suzutsuki, but to think that even Konoe would ask for compensation. Then again, it must be something very important. As I was thinking about what it could be, Konoe took a deep breath, and then opened her mouth.

“...I want you to spend the day of the school festival with me!” With a bit of a clumsy representation, these were her words.

“...School festival?”

“Yeah, it’s right around the corner, right. I’ll listen to your problems, so I want you to walk around with me at the school festival.”

“I mean, I don’t mind, but...aren’t you gonna do that with Suzutsuki?”

They’re master and butler, and unlike a long time ago, ever since the incident in April, they’ve actually gotten along really well, even at school. Why not ask her then?

“The young lady will be busy during the school festival, as she is the class representative. They have to support the school festival execution committee, right?”

“Now that you mention it...”

Just as Konoe stated, the class representatives at our school have the

duty to help in this execution committee. Basically, the two representatives decide on what the class offers during the school festival. On a side note, the male representative of our class is called Tamura, and we decided on a cosplay cafe as our attraction.

Since the girls will be wearing cosplays when serving the customers, it's pretty maniacal of an attraction, and as you might imagine, the girls were protesting against this a lot. However, Tamura fought against this to his best ability, and even managed to grasp victory with a majority vote.

Naturally, the boys were treating him like Jesus reincarnated, but when one of them asked 'Your impression with the girls will take a dip for the worse, you know? They're already giving you cold stares', Tamura delivered the unexpected coming-out with 'It's fine...I actually like that sort of thing', which even had the boys confused on what to feel.

Thanks to that pervert...I mean, Tamura, our class decided on the cosplay cafe, and we're currently preparing for that. Naturally, the representatives will be busy with organisational stuff even during the day of the event, but...

"Can't you just use your relationship as butler and master as an excuse to be with her?"

"...Yeah, I said the same thing, but..." Konoe showed somewhat of a troubled expression in return. "The young lady told me not to worry about her, and enjoy the school festival. I know she must be considerate of me, but..."

"But?"

"I...don't really know what it even means to walk around a school festival." Konoe flashed a worried expression.

...So that's what this is. Before this year's April, before I found out the secret that Konoe actually was a girl, she didn't have any friends at this school. At the same time, her relationship with Suzutsuki was still awkward. That's why she's completely lost now. If it's just walking around the school festival, that's no big problem.

“...What an idiot you are.”

She didn't have to desperately ask me for that. We're friends after all...Well, I guess she was worried that I'd say no exactly because we're friends.

“Ain't gotta worry like that. Let's walk around together.”

“...Yeah, thanks. I'm sure...it'll be a fun school festival.” Konoe's expression lit up immediately after. “Alright, now it's your turn, Jirou. What's your problem?”

“...Well, I guess I have to tell you now. But, don't be shocked, okay?”

“Rest assured. I am a butler, I won't be surprised that easily.” Konoe puffed out her chest in confidence.

I mean, you'll be shocked exactly because you're a butler. After all, this is about me being kissed by your master. If anything, I'd be worried if you weren't surprised in any way.

“What's wrong? Just tell me, no need to hold back.”

“A-Alright...So, this about my first kiss—”

Rattle! Before I could even finish my sentence, Konoe shot up from her chair, her cheeks crimson red.

“Why...why is that a topic right now!?”

“I mean...Wait, do you know the details?” When I returned a question, Konoe started blushing even more furiously, and grew silent.

Don't tell me, did Suzutsuki tell Konoe?

“Rather, why would you bring that up now...Wait, did the young lady!?”

That's right, your master kissed me against my will. But, there's no way I can tell her.

“Well...that’s about it. What you expected did happen. I was pretty shocked about it...” I tried to explain things as vaguely as possible.

For some reason, Konoe started panicking, her mouth opening and closing.

“I was surprised as well...A-After all, that was the first time...”

“I heard about that from her as well, but...was that true?”

According to Suzutsuki, that was her first kiss. But, I find it hard to believe. I feel like she’s got all the experience in the world...

“Don’t be ridiculous! O-Of course it was...!” Butler-kun denied my assumptions flat-out.

That is one hell of a menacing look. It’s almost like I was doubting her, and not Suzutsuki.

“But...why would you bring that up now...it’s been two months since...”

“Two months?”

That kiss happened last month, so it’s barely been one.

“But...it’s all your fault! T-That time couldn’t be helped!”

“You’re right. I didn’t run away after all, and what’s happened cannot be undone. But...it was my first time, you know?”

“Urk...that does make sense...”

“Right? If possible, I’d like to redo it, alright.”

Seriously, I’d love to be able to go back in time. With these thoughts, I let out a sigh.

“Wha...wha...” Konoe’s eyes shot open, looking at me like she had seen a ghost.

Is she okay? I feel like she’ll dislocate her jaw at this rate.

“Jirou...W-W-What did you just say?”

“Hm? I said that I’d love to redo it.”

“Really...?”

“Yeah, if possible, I’d like to do it right now.”

“Right now!?” Konoe raised a loud shocked voice.

Of course? After all, that was my first kiss, and even if that was the same for Suzutsuki, I want to get a second chance.

“But...even if you suddenly tell me now...Doing something so bold right here...”

“Right here? I mean, does it matter? It’s just the two of us here right now.”

We’re just talking about it. And, weren’t you the one who said you’d hear me out? Not like it’s anything bold either, I’m just telling you about my past trauma.

“It truly is just the two of us here right now, but...” Konoe grasped the bottom part of her uniform.

Hm? Why’s she so embarrassed now? Maybe I shouldn’t have asked for advice after all?

“I mean, weren’t you the one who asked me to do it?”

“When did I say that!?”

“Just now...?”

“!? N-No! I...I just said that I would hear you out!”

See, you said it yourself. It’d be troublesome if you just quit mid-way of giving me advice. So, let me explain myself until the very end.

“I’ve already revealed everything to you, I can’t turn back now.”

“...!”

“So please, let me take this properly until the very end.”

“T-The very end!? Does that mean...”

“Of course, until I’m satisfied. I’ve been worried about it this entire past month.”

“~~~!”

For some reason, I could see steam rising from Konoe’s head. And, she stayed silent for a long moment.

“...A-Alright.” A voice about to disappear reached my ears. “But... going until the very end is a bit...I mean, we’re inside the school’s infirmary, so we never know when someone might be coming...And, I also have to mentally prepare myself...”

“...?”

Basically, she’s saying that we should move to another location? Hm, maybe she realized that this could turn longer than expected. Though, I don’t get what she’s on about with that mentally preparing stuff.

“That’s why...while we’re here, we’ll only go with...**Mumble mumble.**”

“Hm? Did you say something towards the end? I couldn’t clearly hear it.”

“Wha...I-It’s pretty obvious even without me having to say it out loud! Damn it...Jirou, you bully...” Konoe muttered with a faint voice.

—And then.

“...Mm.”

Slowly, she closed her eyes, like she was scared of something. At the same time, she pushed out her lips a bit...Hm? I feel like I somehow walked into some unfathomable development without knowing? It’s almost as if I could reach a secret ending if I kept walking this

way...?



“Come on...If you’re going to do it, then...do it fast.”

“Huh? Do what?”

“~~~! I didn’t think you were that much of a twisted bastard!”

Konoe started tearing up, and pouted.

“I’m talking about...the kiss.”

“...Wha?”

“Don’t ‘Wha’ me! Do you still plan on playing dumb all the way...? Despite you telling me to do it...!”

“.....”

...Oh crap. I don’t have any clue what’s going on here. How did things end up this way? Subaru-sama is right in front of my eyes, her lips in reach. So faintly red, almost like cherry blossoms...

“...Mm.”

Almost as if she couldn’t hold back anymore than this, with her reddened cheeks, she slowly approached, and leaned her body against mine—

“What are you two up to?” A dignified voice filled the infirmary.

When I turned towards the source, I spotted a beauty with long and glossy black hair, tied up into twintails, standing in front of the infirmary door. Just like Konoe, she wore a uniform distinctively different from our normal uniform. On top of possessing a dignified expression with fitting proportions on her body, she was also the real deal of a rich lady—Suzutsuki Kanade. She looked at me and Konoe, facing each other, and gave us somewhat of a cold gaze.

“Y-Young lady!? Y-You’re wrong! Jirou just forcefully...!” Dear butler-kun moved away from me at an alarming speed.

Hey, what do you mean by ‘forcefully’, huh? You were the one who suddenly brought up that kiss...

“Hmm, I see.” Suzutsuki closely inspected me, and approached us.

Urk, why is she so normal? An entire month might have passed since that incident, but I’m still not over it, alright.

“Well, I don’t particularly care what you are up to, but be mindful that as long as we are at school, you are a boy, so if someone other than me saw you, they might get the wrong idea.”

“Urk...M-My deepest apologies.” Konoe acted like a puppy that got scolded by its owner.

And then, she gave me a sharp gaze. Almost like she wanted to say ‘This is all your fault!’, I felt a severe amount of pressure in her eyes. No, what did I do?

“Good morning, Jirou-kun. This feels like it’s been a while since we’ve talked like this, right.” Suzutsuki moved to the side of the bed I was seated on, all the while keeping a gentle expression.

Don’t joke with me. Did you think I’d just stay calm about this, and let you talk?

“Alright, Konoe. I’ll be going back to the classroom.” I said, and got off the bed, heading to the door.

We’re talking about that rich lady. She’s probably planning on opening that wound in my heart even more. That’s why I decided to disengage any communication. Running is victory in this context.

“—No, I’m not letting you leave.”

Suddenly, Suzutsuki’s arms wrapped around mine...No, wrapped around my entire body, as she embraced me from behind.

“...!? Y-You!”

Gaaaah what is this woman doing! Did she anticipate me running away!?

“L-Let go!”

“Oh my, why should I?”

“Why...You know of my gynophobia, right!?”

“That’s right, and this is part of your treatment process.”

“Treatment process...!”

You’re clearly just out to torture me. Is she angry that I skipped out on the treatment program or something? That’s a bit too sudden though. Even Konoe was looking at us in shock.

“Ugh...!”

...Not good. I can feel the goosebumps all over my body, sweat drenching my shirt. My gynophobia is activating. Not to mention that with her arms on my body...I felt a strong softness hitting my back...!

“A-Alright, I get it! Just get away from me! I don’t want to faint again!”

Unable to handle it, I screamed while throwing my arms up, to which Suzutsuki gave a simple ‘Yes’, and moved her arms away...Huh? That was much easier than I would have expected.

“Huh...Jirou-kun, that’s quite the interest you have.” Suzutsuki spoke up with a dignified voice.

I turned around to look at her, to which I saw her hold a red plastic mass in her right hand...Wait, hold on. That’s my phone.

“Ah! Did you steal it after that tackle just now!?”

She’s done me in. That damn Devil Suzutsuki. I was wondering why she let me go this easily, but that’s because she already accomplished her goal in stealing my smartphone from my pants pocket, using it as a hostage. Still, that was some slick movement...or, I guess I just wasn’t paying attention.

“Now you won’t be able to escape.” She announced her victory with a proud tone in her voice.

Damn it...But, you haven’t beaten me yet! You might be a devil, but in terms of battle strength, you’re still just a girl! I can push you back with strength. I don’t want to use violence against a girl, but as long as I can get my phone back—

“...is probably what you are thinking, so excuse me. I went ahead

and unlocked your phone.”

“!”

“Also, I changed your PIN.”

“!?”

“You’re quite careless, aren’t you. To think the PIN of your phone was actually your birthday.”

“

“On a side note, the wallet you had in your back pocket is over where. Oh my, you only have 580 yen on you right now?” Suzutsuki checked the contents of my wallet, which she carried in her left hand.

Naturally, while smiling like the devil. I give up. I’ll put up a white flag, so please don’t leak any of my personal information or the contents of my wallet any further than this. Also, please revert my PIN back to how it was before...

“Then, let’s have a talk. Once we’re done, you can have it all back.”

“...Yes, I understand, Suzutsuki-san.”

Please, can someone just figure out that woman’s weaknesses, and send all their research to my mail? I’ll pay you 580 yen for it. You might think it’s cheap, but this is all I have right now.

“...Also, what about classes? Don’t think the first period ended already.”

Looking over at the clock inside the infirmary, there was still some more time until recess. An honor student like Suzutsuki wouldn’t skip classes like this.

“First period has already ended. Then again, it wasn’t really a proper class.”

“What do you mean?”

“Because the teacher was on leave, it was self-study. Apparently they suddenly fell ill or something.”

Hm, lucky for me then. No reason to copy notes then, and I don’t get an earful for skipping.

“And about that, there’s one more thing I need to tell you two.”

“Something you need to tell us?”

“Yes. In fact—our attraction for the school festival was changed.”

“...Huh?”

...Hold on, what is this woman saying?

“I wanted to use that time effectively, so we turned it into a long homeroom. There, we had a lot of objections regarding the cosplay cafe.”

“H-Hold on a second! We had a lot of those before, but the majority vote won, right! And, what about Tamura!? There’s no way he would allow any change in the program like that...”

That’s right, Tamura’s a school festival execution committee member as well. Thanks to him, we overwhelmed the girls in a majority vote, and won the cosplay cafe fair and square.

“Ah, Tamura-kun, right.” Suzutsuki used the name of the pervert with an awfully cold tone. “—He died.”

“Tamuraaaaaaa!?”

“Just kidding. But, he was hospitalized, that is the truth.”

“Wha...Suzutsuki, was that your doing!?”

She might have sent some assassin to Tamura for all I know. After all, she’s crazy enough to kiss her classmate.

“You make me sound like some villain. This morning, Tamura-kun was hit by a car on his way to school. He’s not in grave danger, but

he'll stay hospitalized for a while.”

“T-The heck is up with that...”

Damn it, Tamura. Be a man! I was hit by a motorbike myself, and I'm at school right now. Your stock prices are taking a dip for the worse, you know.

“No worries. As the class president, I plan on properly fulfilling my job as the executive committee member even without him. As for the attraction itself, it won't be that different from a normal cosplay cafe.

“Huh?”

What's this about? The girls were against it, remember? As I was left bewildered, Suzutsuki's lips moved up, as she formed a bewitching smile.

“We've decided to do—a boys cross-dressing cafe. Instead of the girls, the boys will have to take off their clothes.”

“Wha...”

Out of shock, I failed to properly use my mouth. How could this happen? Instead of being able to enjoy the girls cosplaying, it was decided that I had to be the one cosplaying. Not to mention that it had to be female clothes of all things...

“Um, young lady...” There, Konoe raised an uneasy voice. “D-Does that mean...that I have to cross-dress as well?”

“!”

Oh right, since the boys will be forced to cosplay, Konoe, who is always wearing male clothes, will have to dress like a girl as well.

“Yes, of course. That's the reason I decided on this plan. Everyone wants to see you wearing female clothes.”

“...! A-Are you sure about this!?”

“About what?”

“I mean, Konoe’s a girl to begin with!”

“So, you don’t want to see her crossdress as a girl?”

“Urk...”

“Not to mention that I went out of my way to get...Ah, no, that was supposed to be a secret.”

“!?”

Now hold on there. I wanna see it. I really wanna see it now. After all, that cat-eared butler last month was plenty destructive already.

“I myself didn’t think things would turn so complicated. However, the majority vote decided it.”

“Majority vote...Weren’t the boys in the lead with at least two or three votes!”

In terms of sheer numbers, the boys won. Even without Tamura, they shouldn’t have been able to be overthrown this easily.

“What are you talking about? That’s why I overturned it.”

“...Wha?”

“After all, in terms of a majority vote—Two boys didn’t participate, remember?”

“!”

Ahhh, crap! I forgot that Konoe and I weren’t part of the vote! I bet Konoe must have voted for the boys as well, because she most definitely doesn’t want to wear female clothes...!

“Also, there’s no need to worry regarding Subaru’s case. You just have to support her so that nobody finds out that she actually is a girl. Didn’t you say so back during Golden Week?”

I mean, I might have said something along the lines of that, but the situation was clearly different from before. Right now, we’re talking

about the entire school, not just my family. There's way too many chances for her to be found out.

"How about you, Subaru? It's a cosplay crossdressing cafe. You love cute clothes, right? It'll give you a chance to try out all sorts of stuff."

"Urk..."

"Not to mention that you can wear all the cute things you love in front of everyone."

"Cute clothes..." The crossdressing butler hesitated, only to let out a loose 'Ehehe' laugh later.

That damn Devil Suzutsuki. She really knows how to win over her own butler. I didn't think she'd use her butler's interests for her goal. Still, the culture festival, huh. I don't think I'll have much time to enjoy it at this rate.

"It's about time for the second period. Jirou-kun, you go ahead."

"Hm? I don't mind, but why? Do you plan on skipping classes or something?"

That'd be a bit odd. Or rather, the first time, I think. Never seen the honor students Konoe and Suzutsuki skip class before.

"We're not skipping. In fact, this object had been in my shoe box this morning." Suzutsuki said, and took out a pink envelope.

The heck is this? It feels like a really girly letter...

"This is actually a love letter."

"Love...Wha, in this day and age!?"

"That's right, I was called to an empty space during this recess. Of course, going alone is a bit too dangerous, so I'll take Subaru with me." Suzutsuki calmly explained.

It's true that Suzutsuki is admired by pretty much every boy in this school, and she's been confessed to a million times even during her

first year, with all of them being shut down immediately, but...

“Say, Jirou-kun, what do you think?”

Suddenly, Suzutsuki turned towards me.

“What do I think...?”

“About this love letter. Do you think I should go there after all?”

“Hm? Of course. Also, you already decided on it, didn’t you?”

“.....” Suzutsuki gave me a dubious gaze, and let out a sigh.

“Then...what if I agreed?”

“Huh?”

“I mean, what if I went to meet that person, and agreed to their confession, what would you think?”

“.....?”

Even if she suddenly asks me that, it’s hard to really comment. If anything, I feel bad for the guy who’ll end up dating that rich lady.

“...Nothing much. Just go out with them, then?”

Naturally, I couldn’t tell her the truth, so I just said something random to fit the mood. In response to that, Suzutsuki stayed quiet for a moment, and muttered a dejected ‘...I see’.....Hm? Why’d she make it sound like she expected something else? Just my imagination maybe? I mean, it’s something you can’t fully see if you don’t pay close attention.

“Hey, Subaru.” Suzutsuki turned towards her butler. “What would you do? Imagine I went to meet that person, and that person forcefully kissed me?”

“!” I felt a cold sweat run down my back.

T-This woman, she’s asking that in the presence of the person she nonconsensually kissed last month.

“Kiss...forced on the young lady?” Konoe thought about it for a moment, only to respond with a serious expression. “I would have to kill them.”

“!?”

“No matter what their reason may be, I won’t forgive anybody who dares to defile the young lady like that.”

“...U-Um, Konoe-san. Isn’t there more of a peaceful solution...”

“What are you talking about, Jirou. No matter who the other person may be, assaulting the young lady in such a fashion deserves a death sentence.” The butler said, while puffing out her chest covered with the corset.

My entire body started quivering in fear like I was the epicenter of a magnitude 8 earthquake. Of course, the source of it was that violent butler over there.

“Fufu, thank you, Subaru. How reliable. Leaving that aside, Jirou-kun? Are you okay? Your face looks quite pale, maybe you should drink some medicine?”

“.....”

“I wouldn’t mind helping you drink mouth-to-mouth.”

“Wha?!”

When I was shocked, Suzutsuki’s lips relaxed a bit, and she whispered a teasing ‘Just kidding’. This woman...She’s doing this on purpose. She’s trying to scare me by pushing the conversation into that direction. Damn it, terrorising my heart like that. What did I do to deserve all of your anger?

“So then, see you later, Jirou-kun. Once I’ve rejected the confession, we’ll be coming to the classroom.” After returning my phone and wallet, Suzutsuki took Konoe with her, and left the infirmary.

“...Jeez.”

Well, I have nothing to do but go to class, I guess. I got up from the bed, and moved my body. Yep, everything's looking fine so far. If anything, being kicked by that girl hurt far more than getting run over.

"Damn it...that nasty Usagi." I spit a complaint in the empty infirmary.

All of this is her fault because she ran me over with her bike.

"Hm? Oh right, it wasn't Usagi, it was Usami."

Well, same thing. I doubt I'll ever talk with her again. More importantly, the second period is about to begin, I need to hurry back to the classroom.

"—Who's nasty?"

Without a warning, a sharp and cold voice stabbed into my ears. The source of the voice stood close to the door, the girl that most definitely had run me over this morning.

"Also, it's Usami, not Usagi. How many more times do I have to tell you?"

That's right, it was Usami Masamune. With a bothered expression, the girl walked into the room, arms crossed. And, after closely inspecting me, she spoke up.

"Come with me, Sakamachi Kinjiro. There's something important I need to talk with you about."

"....."

Well, it probably isn't a confession, huh.

1 Usagi = Rabbit

2 Dis

Chapter 2: Rooftop Secret

“Go out with me.”

It was an unexpected order with no preamble or warning. We stood on the rooftop, but a different one from where Konoe and I would eat lunch from time to time, located atop Rouran Academy’s second building. The early summer sun shone directly down on us—as Usami Masamune threw these words at me.

“...Excuse me?”

“Don’t give me that. I’m telling you to go out with me. Or to be more precise, I want you to act as my lover. At least until the school festival is over. Also, you have no right to decline, just to let you know.”

“.....”

...Now hold on. Right to decline or not, I don’t even get what’s going on right now.

“What, you have a problem with that?”

“...of course I do? Why are we even up on the rooftop like this?”

“I like this place. Barely any people come here, so I can be alone.”

“Huh.”

Well, they say that idiots like high places. Still, tag me here and ask me to act as your boyfriend? What kind of development is this? What did I do to deserve this?

“Alright then, let me give you a brief explanation. Do you know the [S4]?” She asked me, as her twintails swayed in the wind.

“Heard the name before. Wasn’t it this school’s number one fanclub for Konoe?”

[S4]...Namely, [Shooting Star Subaru-sama], right. Honestly speaking, I only heard crazy shit about them. Simply to get in there, you need to seal a blood pact or something, and if you betray them, you'll be forced to skydive without a parachute. It's like an urban legend.

"I'm a member there." Usami announced bluntly.

I mean, I figured as much. After all, that would explain why she hates me this much. The peeps from [S4] can't stand seeing me get along with their beloved Subaru-sama.

"But, how is that related to me going out with you?"

"Hear me out until the very end. Us [S4] actually have a secret event during this school festival."

"...Don't tell me, are you selling some of the rumoured Konoe goods there?"

Ever since Konoe started attending this school, there's been some black market and underground auctions regarding any Subaru-sama goods, which also built up to this urban legend, but to think that actually existed.

"That is one thing, but this year the direction is different."

"Direction?" I asked, unsure of what she was talking about.

"—War."

"...What?"

"A war will happen. It will be an absolute all-out war for the hegemony of this school."

"....."

Is her head okay? Maybe she's trying out some new drug or whatever. That would explain a lot of things. I need to bring her to the infirmary...or, student guidance?

“...What’s that look in your eyes for?” She must have guessed what I was thinking, as Usami threw me a harsh warning. “There will be a war during this year’s school festival. It’ll be between us [S4], and the other big faction of the fanclub—’Watch over Subaru-sama with a warm gaze committee’.”

“Urk.”

The moment I heard those words, I couldn’t hold back a groan. Can you blame me? The girls who are part of this committee...are interested in a certain subgenre. They are fujoshi, interested in anything that is boy and boy. They’re hungry for more BL material between me and Konoe, which is why there’s some weird rumour going around that me and their beloved Subaru-sama are dating ever since this April, when we ended up as friends.

Of course, the [S4] got wind of that, and has been plotting to assassinate me under the punishment of having dared to lay my hands on Subaru-sama, but the reason I’m still alive is because of this committee protesting against that decision. Ever since this stalemate began, two months passed. There’s even the rumour that beneath the calm surface, they’ve been waging war like this was Vietnam ever since, but I don’t want to know about that.

“The cold war has ended. [S4] and the [Watch over Committee] are going to battle it out at the school festival, attempting to bring an end to this rivalry. The loser will be sucked up and integrated into the winner’s group.”

“Integrated?”

“The power structure will change. Right now, [S4] and the [Watch over Committee] are keeping a vague balance, but once this event is over, the winner will have absolute supremacy.”

That’s why—she continued.

“Until the school festival begins, you need to act as my boyfriend. I want our group to get an advantage no matter how insignificant it may be.”

“Well, I get where you’re coming from...”

Basically, I have to act like that until the battle begins. Namely, to go out with this girl...and work against the rumour that Konoe and I are in a BL relationship. In doing so, the [Watch over Committee] will be shaken, as they will lose their support. What horrendous background work this is.

“I bet this must have been decided by god. My encounter with you this morning is a blessing. Thanks to that, I came up with that plan.” Usami puffed out her moderate chest in arrogance.

What god are you talking about? There’s no way he’d throw in some divine intervention for such a stupid reason. I doubt he has that much time.

“Listen, did you really think I would agree just like that?”

Like hell I would. Sorry to tell you, but I want the [Watch over Committee] to win, alright. Being turned into some BL material doesn’t exactly sit right with me either, but it’s better than fearing for my life.

“No worries. If we win after that event, we will restructure the upper echelon of the [S4], so that you can live in peace. Our—No, my goal is simply to crush the [Watch over Committee].”

“...Hm.”

Well, if those are the conditions, then I wouldn’t mind helping out. If anything, that’s some benefit I get. If everything works out, I won’t ever have to see BL doujinshi with me as the main character. However...

“What, you still don’t seem satisfied. Do you hate the idea of fake dating me that much? Not satisfied with my looks?”

“No, of course not.”

Her looks aren’t a problem. If anything, she’s really cute, so going out with her would have me uneasy.

“Eh...really? Then, what’s the problem?” For some reason, Usami started blushing ever so slightly.

...What, is she happy about that indirect compliment? Why’s she acting so girly now? I mean, there’s a bigger problem than all of this war nonsense. She doesn’t know about my gynophobia. Even if we’re only pretend-dating, we’ll still have to hang out around each other during that time. It won’t be long until she finds out my secret.

Hmm...what to do about this? I thought to myself, and crossed my arms.

“Do you hate the idea that much? Well, since you don’t swing that way, I guess you might dislike dating a girl.”

“.....”

Now hold on a second. What did this woman just say?

“You! What are you on about!?”

“I mean, aren’t you...into guys?”

“Waaaaaaah!?”

Ahhhhh this is a lie! A girl in my garde thinks I’m actually into guys!

“Eh, am I wrong? I feel like that’s an established fact by now.”

“What do you mean by established fact?!”

“I mean...aren’t you dating Subaru-sama?”

“No way! We’re just friends!”

“Friends...Don’t tell me, sex friends?”

“Nooooo!”

“You’re the worst! So you were just after Subaru-sama’s body!”

“I’m telling you that’s not it, you perverted rabbit!”

“W-Who’s a perverted rabbit!? I’m just stating the obvious!”

“How is that obvious...”

This is too cruel! I’ve been trying to avoid it until now, but my image at school is awful...What a shocker...

“The reason [S4] and [Watch over Committee] are on such rivaling terms is because everyone firmly believes you and Subaru-sama are dating.”

“Believing...How did that rumour even come into existence?”

Is it because I accidentally pushed down Konoe inside the school? I mean, that did happen, but nobody should have seen that.

“Because you’re way too close! You even eat lunch together!”

“That’s normal between friends, right?”

“Subaru-sama isn’t normal! He never opened his heart towards anybody but his master Suzutsuki Kanade! The fact that he’s with you is plenty weird already!”

“T-That’s...”

The reason is simple. I found out that Konoe is a girl, and she’s afraid of me leaking that, which is why she stays around me at all times. I’m an exception to the case, nothing more.

“Not to mention...You know! I have the proof with me!” Usami showed me her phone screen.

“.....! Y-You, why do you have that...!?”

Looking at the screen, I was left shocked. After all, on there was Konoe, wearing our school’s uniform...but the girls’ version.

“Two months ago, I took that picture when I was out shopping in the town next to ours. What is this about? Why is Subaru-sama crossdressing?”

“.....”

“Not to mention that you presented Subaru-sama with a plush toy, and you were practically embracing each other, right? And, to finish it off...!” Usami gave me a sharp scowl. “A kiss...you are both men, and you were about to kiss each other!” She screamed, her face beet red.

.....This is bad. I’m being backed into a corner. If I deny all of that, she might figure out that Konoe is actually a girl.

“On top of that, there’s this rumour going around.” Usami took a breath, and continued. “That Subaru-sama is into crossdressing.”

“!”

“They’re also saying that he’s been starting to look more like a girl, his gestures and all.”

“.....”

“That’s why, there’s a few people who start thinking that Subaru-sama might be into crossdressing. Well, talking about Subaru-sama, I doubt that’s happening. The clothes in the picture, you probably forced him to wear, right?”

That’s what’s going on here, right? — She looked up at me, and asked.

...H-How could this happen? Thinking about it, I feel like Konoe’s been acting more like a girl as of late...or rather, she’s been letting down her guard too much, but to think that it would lead to such a misunderstanding...Where there’s no smoke, no fire can exist. Eventually, they might start guessing that Subaru-sama is actually a girl. That...is something I have to avoid at all costs. If people find out that she’s a girl, she’ll be forced to quit as Suzutsuki’s butler...!

“.....!”

Through careful consideration, at the limit of my possibilities, I decided on a certain plan. Just like a certain rich lady, I would just blurt out nonsense. In order to protect the secret of my friend, I made

a decision.

“...Alright, I'll be honest with you. Just as you said, Konoe and I are in that kind of relationship!”

“I-I knew it! So the rumours were true! So, wait, you are...”

“...! That's right! I'm gay! I love BL! Something bad about that!?”

“N-No, of course not...”

“Then don't dig so deep into my interests!”

“Urk...S-Sorry. But, you should just be honest with it.”

“This late into the game!? What exactly!?”

“That you undoubtedly are into guys.”

“I...I! I loooooooooooooove men!!”

June was getting close to the end. The early summer sun shone down mercilessly. At the top of my lungs, I screamed. In all honesty, I was just winging it. I wonder why...the sun is so bright. I feel like I just lost something very important as a man. I'm sorry, Mom. I don't why I'm apologizing to you, but for now, I'm sorry.

“U-Um, sorry? I didn't think you'd...I mean, I wasn't expecting you to be this serious about it. So...let's calm down, okay?” Usami spoke with a gentle expression, trying to be as nice as possible.

...It hurts. What is this situation. Why am I saying that I'm into guys in front of a female classmate just like this. Alright, this is all to protect Konoe's secret. No, seriously! Please, believe me! I only like girls, okay!

“But, now you must understand it, right? If you help with my plan, that's the only way for you. You have to act as my boyfriend. If you don't, I'll show this picture to the whole school.”

Are you kidding me?

“Didn’t I tell you? You have no right to decline here.”

Damn it, this woman really has no good part in her soul. Going out with her, even if it’s just acting, is dangerous. In the worst case scenario, she might find out about my gynophobia...

“Are you still hesitating? Or, are you scared of going out with a girl? I really didn’t think you’d be that of a chicken bastard.”

“Wha...S-Shut up! Who’s a chicken bastard!?” I desperately tried to deny Usami’s words.

However, she just kept grinning, and continued.

“Hmm, then why don’t you show it to me, **Sakamachi Kinjiro**.”

“!?”

S-She’s using my full name right now? D-Don’t tell me...did she realize? Only that rich lady before caught on to it, and yet...!

“What’s wrong? Come on, show me, Sakamachikinjiro.”

“.....”

“Sakama, Chikin, Jirou.”

“.....”

“Will you hurry up already, chicken bastard!”

“Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” Unable to bear it, I screamed.

“Hmpf, I didn’t think you were as much of a chicken as your name suggested. You’re that scared to pretend to be dating a girl?”

“Y-You wench...!”

How nasty of a personality do you have? Fine by me. If you’re going that far, I’ll play along.

“Alright. I’ll act as your boyfriend. Only until the school festival is over, of course.” I deeply hated the idea, but I agreed to Usami’s

words.

Thinking about it, acting as the lover of a girl doesn't sound half bad. There's the danger of her finding out about my secret, but it might help fix my gynophobia as well. Being around a girl must be a plus for me. Probably.

"Alright, negotiations complete, then. This is a secret between the two of us, so remember that?" Her twintails shook, as Usami showed a gleeful smile. "Then, let's start with names."

"Names?"

"Exactly. Since we'll be acting as lovers from now on, we need to call each other with intimate names, or it'll seem off."

"Intimate...What, do you want to be called 'Usamin' or something?"

"...Do you want to be kicked again?" She glared at me.

Maybe she has some bad memories with that name? That's some crazy killing intent you're throwing my way there. Usami shook her head, and continued.

"Usami is fine. Just go with that from now on."

".....Usami, huh."

"Also, I already came up with a name for you." She puffed out her chest, and continued. "Stupid Chicken."

"...Huh?"

"That'll be your name. Stupid Chicken. What do you think? You're stupid, and a chicken, so it should be perfect, right?"

...How is that perfect? At least let me call you 'Usamin' in return then. I feel like I at least deserve that...

"Please treat me well, Stupid Chicken." Usami said so, and looked up at me.

She showed an innocent, simply blissful smile.

“...R-Right. Same here, Usami.”

Hm? What’s wrong, why are you blushing like that?”

“N-Nothing at all! Don’t look at me!”

Reflexively, I averted my face from Usami. I couldn’t help but blush because of that. I mean, that’s just not fair. After all, when she smiles, she’s so cute.

“Anyway, let’s go back to the classroom. Third period is about to start. Of course, we’ll be eating lunch together. You’ll be paying. You’re my boyfriend after all.”

“.....”

Let me take back that statement. It seems like my naming sense is off. A cute name like ‘Usamin’ definitely doesn’t fit her.

“You damn nasty rabbit.”

“Hm? Did you say something? Stupid Chicken.”

We spit poison at each other, and headed towards the door of the rooftop. Well, all of this will be over after the school festival, so I just have to hold back until then. I let out a sigh, and put my hand on the doorknob.

“—Ah, I forgot to tell you something important.” Usami moved her lips, as she spoke with a reminiscent tone. “Hey, Stupid Chicken. Since you agreed to assist me, you’ll be my boyfriend until the school festival is over. Basically—we’re partners, right. If so, then promise me one thing.” She continued with an oddly serious expression. “Don’t lie to me.”

“...Lie?”

“That’s right. I hate it when people lie to me. That’s why, swear to me. Swear that you definitely won’t lie to me. In return, I won’t lie to you either.”

“...Huh.”

That’s an odd way of phrasing things. I wasn’t planning on lying either way, but she sure does not trust me at all. Even calling us partners is still pretty distant.

“Alright, I got it. But, before that promise, how about you actually have some faith in me? It’s exhausting that you treat me like some stranger. You’ll lose your friends like this.”

How do I say this, despite having a cute face, she sure can be twisted. She’s that cute, so she could just be honest.

“—It’s fine.” Usami muttered with a somewhat dejected tone. “...I don’t have any friends after all.”

“Eh?”

“...No, it’s nothing. Anyway, just don’t lie to me. Then, I’ll put some more trust in you. Okay, Stupid Chicken?” She spoke with conviction in her voice, and yet averted her gaze.

...I’ll take it back one more time. Usami Masamune isn’t just twisted, she’s crazy. You can’t believe in someone unless they don’t lie to you? I feel like she shielded herself and her honesty, and is just careful and wary about everyone around her. Like a rabbit, who can’t trust people...

“What, is there something on my face?”

When I was spacing out, Usami glared at me.

“.....”

Well, whatever. We’ll only pretend to date until the school festival is over.

“...Hm?”

Wait a second, am I not forgetting something crucial?

“Hey, does that mean...I have to act as your boyfriend even on the

day of the school festival?”

“Huh? Of course. We’ll be walking around then, acting like a couple. That should work just fine against the [Watch over Committee].”

Crap, that’s not good. I just promised Konoe that we’d walk around during the school festival. What should I do about this...I need to find a way out of this, or...

“—Jirou? What are you doing here?”

Suddenly, an alto voice reached my ears. Before I could open up the door of the rooftop, someone got ahead of me.

“K-Konoe!? Why are you here!?”

That’s right, this is Konoe Subaru we’re talking about. That butler had opened the door, observing me and Usami with wide open eyes.

“Why...I mean, you didn’t come back for 2nd period, so I was looking for you. Since you weren’t on the usual rooftop, I came here instead...Jirou, who is that girl next to you?” She turned her translucent eyes at Usami now.

...Oh man, I can tell that this situation will take a dip for the worse really soon...

“Ah...ah...Shu...Shubaru-shama...!” Usami hid behind my back.

She probably didn’t want to meet gazes with Subaru, as her gaze wandered all over the place, her cheeks red from embarrassment.

“H-Hey, say something. Konoe’s looking at us weirdly.”

I called out to Usami, who was still clinging to my sleeve, with a quiet voice, only for her to shake her head.

“No no no no no! What are you talking about, Stupid Chicken! An average human being like me can never talk with Subaru-sama! You do something about this!”

Jeez, her character is completely different from before. Where did

that pushy and arrogant attitude from before go? Now she definitely is like a rabbit, hiding in her hole.

“Even if you say that...What am I supposed to do about this?”

“Easy! You just have to tell him that we’re a couple!”

You serious?

“Also, aren’t you and Subaru-sama in that kind of relationship? If so, you need to be honest here. Then he’ll surely understand!”

No no no, we’re not in that kind of relationship, alright. Also, I seriously doubt that Konoe would just simply accept that.

“...What are you two whispering about? Is it that hard to tell me?” Konoe’s dubious gaze pierced my chest.

Subaru-sama was giving me a cold glare like she usually would at school. Damn...no way around this, huh. I don’t care what happens anymore.

“L-Let me introduce you. This girl’s name is Usami Masamune. A-And...we are dating.”

“...Huh?” Konoe’s mouth opened wide in shock, only for her to start laughing. “I’ve heard better jokes. You’re going out with that girl? You of all people, Jirou? I don’t buy that.”

“.....”

Hey now, aren’t you being awfully rude with that comment? I figured you wouldn’t buy it immediately, but there’s no need to insult me. Konoe however ignored my displeasure, and instead looked at Usami behind me.

“Come on, tell me the truth. No, spit it out. Who are you to Jirou?”

I heard a faint shriek. I can’t blame her, the current Konoe is absolutely in her Subaru-sama mode—namely a prince that won’t anybody approach her. Her sour expression emitted crazy levels of pressure, to the point where even I felt like shrieking. Why is she this

angry, I wonder.

“What’s wrong? Say something. Also...w-why are you clinging to Jirou like that?” The amount of pressure heightened even further.

Is she in a bad mood today? That is some sharp gaze of hers. I only saw her like that last time she went to pick out bread at the school store...Is she bothered about this? Maybe I should say something—is what I thought.

“Um...we actually are dating!” Usami must have hit her limit, and screamed.

“Wha...” This time, Konoe staggered backwards.



Met with this unexpected revelation, Butler-kun directed her gaze over at me again.

“...Jirou? That’s enough joking around. Why is that girl even trying to deceive me?” Her translucent eyes were full with doubt, staring at me.

However.

“I-I’m not deceiving you! This person and I are dating! We promised that we would go on a date during the school festival as well!”

Hearing Usami’s affirmation, Konoe let out a dumbfounded ‘Eh’, as her expression froze up. Following that, her mouth opened and closed in shock, as she directed an anxious face at me.

“...Jirou, is that true? You plan on going on a date with that girl during the school festival?”

“.....”

I could only nod in silence. Immediately after that, I felt a sharp pain inside the depths of my chest. But, this is all to protect Konoe’s secret. So that she doesn’t have to quit as a butler—

“...!”

Moments after, an impact shook my body. A full-force body blow—Konoe’s right fist hammered right into my solar plexus.

“I...I was wrong about you...!” A certain alto voice reached my ears, sounding like it was about to cry.

As my body collapsed on the ground, I somehow managed to direct my gaze upwards, only to find Konoe’s dampened eyes glaring down at me.

“Even though you promised...that we would walk around together... You promised it to me...Jirou, you liar.” Konoe muttered while pouting, and stormed off the rooftop.

“...Hey, Stupid Chicken. Are...you okay?” Usami seemed worried about the collapsed me, and came closer.

“Yeah, not a big deal. I told you my body’s pretty sturdy.” I answered, as I laid on the ground with my arms and legs open.

...But, I wonder why. I’ve been sparring with Konoe for a while now. That’s why, a single punch like this shouldn’t be enough to keep me down for the count like this. But, as I was gazing up at the early summer blue sky...I couldn’t muster up the strength to get up for a

while.

Chapter 3: Exciting School Festival

“Hey, Jirou. Here’s one thing I understand now.” My classmate Kurose Yamato let out a melancholic sigh next to me. “In recent manga or anime, there’s a growing trend of men crossdressing as women, you know. But...in reality, there are not many men who look good in female clothes.”

“...Kurose. Enough. The more you say, the worse you’ll feel.”

Today is the day of the school festival. The classroom had fully changed into a cafe inside, as Kurose and I stood in front of it, trying to attract customers. The school festival had already begun. We seem to have been blessed by the weather as well, as a lot of people visited our school. Then again, Rouran Academy’s school festival has always held a certain level of popularity around here. Although it would only last a single day, the program was filled to the brim as well, with a lot of interesting attractions every year.

Naturally, we’re offering a very individual attraction ourselves...

“Still, what kind of name even is this...”

Kurose...No, I can’t even call him Kurose anymore. My classmate, forced to wear a tight white nurse uniform, looked at the large billboard in front of the class, and let out a sigh.

‘Boys Crossdressing Cafe – How did things end up this way’

...I mean, you know. How did things come to this, I wonder.

“You still have it good. This uniform was originally planned for a girl, which is why it’s so tight on me...”

The former judo club member and classmate had his large back curl up as he dropped his head in sheer depression. On a side note, I’m dressed as a policewoman. Well, the moment a man like me is

wearing it, it probably isn't a policewoman anymore, but I guess it's better than the guys forced to wear bunny girl or cheerleader costumes inside the classroom while serving customers, being laughed at by the girls in class.

As a result of that, the inside is like hell. Lots of traumas are being born, as well as special interests awakening. I couldn't pick up much, but I heard phrases such as 'This year, my parents are coming to visit...' or 'Oh man, I'm starting to enjoy this...' you know.

However, despite the internal suffering (and joys) of those working classmates, the cafe itself was a great success. Ever since we opened up the store, we've been dealing with a long line outside. Of course, the main source for this popularity undoubtedly was—

"Kyaaa! Subaru-samaaaaa~! Please come to this table next~!" I heard a high-pitched voice from inside the classroom.

I took a peek inside, to which I found a large table put together for customers, filled with girls who raised cheers. Standing in the middle of this mass of people was none other than Subaru-sama, also known as Konoe Subaru—who was wearing a china dress. No exception from the other boys, Konoe turned into another cosplay warrior, but the impact and explosive power from her cosplay put all of her other classmates, us, to shame.

"D-Dear customer, is there anything else you would like to order?" Her cheeks were red from embarrassment, and I could see tears building up in her eyes, as she desperately tried to calmly serve the customers.

The gap between this and her usual indifferent and cool attitude was too strong. Just watching it was a blessing to the eyes.

"Crazy, right. That's Subaru-sama for you. It's not fair being this cute despite being a man." The tight nurse came to take a glance inside the classroom as well, spitting words that had my back freeze up.

Well yeah, Konoe's a girl after all. She had her hair tied up with a pair of fake dumplings, wearing a red china dress that emphasized her white skin. Because of the impactful design, it emphasized her

chest, and the slit at her waist was deeper than the Japan Trench. Thanks to that, everybody could see Subaru-sama's white thighs.

As a result of Konoe's initial embarrassment, or because she's afraid of being found out as a girl, she's moving carefully, and very gently. Not to mention her blushing, she's just too cute. This isn't good for my heart.

Anyway, the inside of the classroom is a mess in a lot of ways. It's burning up like a frying pan on the gas stove. This of course is still on the better end, as we also had girls who wanted Subaru-sama to dance for them. I feel like this cafe could turn into a strip club if we weren't regulated by the school. It'd bring in a lot of money, at least.

"What are you doing?"

Right as I was enjoying the view of the school's prince, a dignified voice called out to me. It was Suzutsuki, who became the provisional store manager since Tamura was still out cold. Since she's a girl, she's wearing the usual uniform, giving me an exhausted gaze.

"We're busy right now, so help out inside the cafe." She said with a calm attitude as always, so I consented.

If we were talking about soccer positions, Suzutsuki would definitely be a midfielder. She has control over the game like the representative of Italy, giving out easy orders to her classmates.

"Can't help it then, we should help serve the customers." I let out a sigh, and was about to move back inside the classroom—when someone suddenly grabbed me by the shoulder.

Looking over, the tight nurse was giving me a dubious gaze from a certain distance.

"K-Kurose, what's up? Did you awaken to some odd fetish?"

That wouldn't be funny at all. If I was pushed down like this, I wouldn't be able to get up. It'll be nurse vs policewoman.

"...I mean, I've been wondering about this for a while, but..." Kurose took a deep breath. "You're pretty close with Suzutsuki Kanade,

right?”

“!”

With that simple question alone, I had goosebumps all over. Of course, experiencing this feeling because of a man dressed in a nurse outfit is a terrifying thought to begin with, and one of the reasons why I'm experiencing it, but the contents of his question were much worse.

If Konoe is like a prince in the eyes of the girls, Suzutsuki Kanade is admired by all the boys in this school. She's a profound and perfect noble lady, and has an atmosphere to her that makes it different to approach, different from Konoe. She rarely talks with boys. However, I am talking with this unattainable flower on somewhat regular terms. Not to mention that we shared a kiss last month.

Everything is simply to protect Konoe's secret, but...I can't tell Kurose about that. I'm not sure how to even explain myself here...

“No, you don't need to tell me. I totally get it.” He whispered with a quiet voice, and approached his mouth to my ears. “You like Suzutsuki Kanade, right?”

“...What?”

When I raised a dumbfounded voice, Kurose threw a ‘Hey now, don't play dumb’ at me.

“I've been thinking about it. Specifically, why you'd become friends with that difficult Subaru-sama. It's all that you can get closer to her, right?”

“Kurose, I'm not going to say anything right now, so just get checked out at a hospital for me, will you.”

“No need to hide it. The reason you're staying with Subaru-sama despite the rumour about you being gay, it's all so that you can be with her, right. At the very least, that's how it looks to us boys.”

“.....”

Because of that odd logic, I could only stay quiet in exhaustion. Why do I have to listen to that messed up logic from a guy wearing a nurse uniform? Now I just feel annoyed more than anything. If that guy wasn't a fake nurse, I'd request a li*ovitan.

"Well, Suzutsuki Kanade and Subaru-sama are the ruling idols at this school. I don't blame you for admiring them. But...you're having some trouble lately, right?"

"What? I'm not poor, you know."

I mean, I wouldn't mind more money, but I'd rather get an illegal loan than ask you for help.

"Come on now. You...had a fight with Subaru-sama, right?"

"...Wha?"

"Ah, bulls-eye, huh. I thought something was off. Recently, you're not meeting up that much." Kurose laughed energetically.

Are you really my classmate Kurose Yamato? Were you playing some brain training games during recess while I wasn't watching? Subconsciously, my gaze drifted towards Konoe, who was taking orders right now. She must have caught on to my gaze by pure coincidence, as she looked at me—Our eyes met for a second, but she immediately looked away.

Ever since that incident up on that rooftop, it's always been like this. When I would try and talk to her, when I would try to invite her to eat lunch together, she fully ignored me. It's almost like we've gone back to before we started talking altogether. On top of that, the plan with Usami that caused all of this isn't working out too well either.

Instead of Konoe, I'm eating lunch with her (on my treat, of course), and walking home from school with her, but...

"...Ouch." A sharp pain assaulted my head.

In order to explain this pain, we have to go back in time—

♀ × ♂

“So, come with me for my shopping today.” Twintails shook in the wind.

The very day after the incident on the rooftop, now that classes had ended, Usami dragged me to a swimsuit store.

“What do you mean ‘So’? You suddenly dragged me here with no warning.”

Apparently it was to practice for the school festival date or something, so that we get used to each other or something along those lines. At the very least, I don’t think I can get used to such a violent rabbit.

“Why are you even buying a swimsuit? Pool classes will start soon.”

“I know that. This is for my class’ attraction during the school festival.”

“...Attraction?” I asked, to which Usami showed a flustered reaction.

“Swimsuit Cafe – Passionate Adventure.”

“...What?”

“That’s the name of our attraction. We’ll be serving customers while wearing swimsuits or something like that. And...”

Ahh, so she wants my help in choosing a swimsuit for her. But, why not go with your friends then...Oh right, she doesn’t have any.

“Alright, then let’s get to work, shall we.”

“Y-Yeah. I’ll pick out some, so wait for me!” She announced with a fast announcement, and ran towards the women’s corner.

I guess my duty today is to fashion check her, huh. Still, a swimsuit cafe? So both our classes were thinking the same thing. Even the naming sense is a mess. Anyway, after waiting for about ten minutes, right as I was looking through some swimsuits of my own, Usami came back with a few swimsuits in her shopping basket.

She then stood in front of a changing cabin, muttering ‘If you open it, I’ll kill you’, filled with pure killing intent, and vanished inside. Not like I would dare to anyway. Following that, I heard faint rustling sounds from inside. After waiting for a brief moment, I heard a disgruntled ‘You can come in. Only with your head, though’ from the inside. It felt like I put my head through a guillotine for a moment, but she’s probably too embarrassed to fully open the curtains, I bet.

Seeing no other option, I did as I was told, and poked my head through the curtains, inside the changing room, and—

“...!” Immediately after, I was at a loss for words.

Standing there was Usami Masamune, awkwardly fidgeting with a blushing face. She’s not wearing a bikini, nor a one-piece swimsuit. It was a stylish design with black fabric and red lines onto it—a competitive swimsuit. This is the type they’d use in the swimming club.



“Y-You, wasn’t there anything else...Like a bikini...or a one-piece?”

When I looked over, her entire shopping basket was full of competitive swimsuits. Is she into that stuff or something?

“No! I don’t want to wear such flashy swimsuits! I can’t wear something so embarrassing in front of my classmates. But, going with the school swimsuit would have been too lame, so...” Usami started

mumbling, lining up excuses.

So this is like her last resort. Then again...it honestly doesn't look that bad on her. A tight competitive swimsuit fit Usami's bodyline quite well, and the black color of it emphasized her otherwise white skin. Is this really her size? I feel like her chest is about to pop out...

"...And? How does it look?" She raised a somewhat anxious voice.

She might be worried because I wasn't saying anything.

"No, it's great. Though, I'm worried that the size might be a bit too small."

I feel like it's got much bigger destructive power than a straight-forward attempt like a bikini. When I gave Usami my honest impression, she returned a quiet 'I-I see...'

.....Is she flustered?

"...Then, I'll take this one. They just ran out of the right-sized ones. Alright, fashion show's over, so pull back your head or I'll strangle you." She must have been attempting to hide her embarrassment with that.

Aye aye, time to retreat. Then again, I feel like looking a bit more wouldn't have hurt.

"Stupid Chicken." There, Usami called out to me beyond the curtains. "Here you go."

A hand came from inside the curtains. Not sure what to do, I simply accepted the object in that hand—Wait, hold on. That's the competitive swimsuit from just now.

"Go and buy that. I'll give you the money."

As I already stood frozen stiff, Usami delivered yet another blow. G-Go and buy that, she says...!

"Don't joke with me! Why would I have to buy a swimsuit for my classmate!" I glanced over at the register.

Of course, there stood a young female employee. You seriously can't expect me to go buy that now. This is even worse than buying porn magazines at a convenience store.

"B-But, it's embarrassing to buy a competitive swimsuit when I'm not even in the swimming club! What if they think I'm into some weird stuff!"

How self-conscious can you be? There's no way that woman would doubt you that much. If even, she's been looking over here for a while now, showing a perfect customer smile.

"I'm not in the swimming club either, nor am I actually a girl!"

"She'll understand it, don't worry."

"Misunderstand, you mean! She'll think I have some weird interests!"

"It's fine. While you're buying it, I'll slip out of the shop."

"You plan on sacrificing me!?"

How can she be so crazy? What am I supposed to do about this? I wouldn't be surprised if a police officer was preparing to tackle me.

"...Hm?"

Thinking that far, I realized something. She told me to buy it. So that means...this is the swimsuit Usami chose. In other words, she was just wearing it...

"Hey! Why are you suddenly all quiet! Y-You're not sniffing on it, are you!?" A shout pierced my ears.

Heek, what is she thinking? Thanks to her scream, the female employee's gaze became sharper. She's like a security guard looking out for theft!

"You're the worst! I know you're a chicken, but using this to your advantage...!"

"You perverted rabbit! Who would do such a thing!?"

“Wha...Don’t tell me, you’re not satisfied with just sniffing!?”

“Stuff your perverted fantasies away, will you!”

“Pervert! Boiling it in a hot pot to keep it moist...!”

“What kind of pervert do you think I am!?”

Also, where did the hot pot even come from!? Damn it, just because of this swimsuit.....Wait, now that I realize it, it’s still warm! It feels like I have a time bomb in my hand!

“Dear customer, could I have a moment?”

“Eeeeeek!”

When I turned towards the source of the voice, the female employee from just now was moving towards us. It must have been subconsciously, but her legs were shaking. She definitely thinks of me as a weirdo.

“Damn it!”

Reflexively, I put my hands on the curtains. I need to remove this ticking time bomb from my hand. And there’s only one method to do so. Namely, to give it back to this stupid rabbit.

“Kya!? Idiot, don’t open it now...” I heard a flustered voice from the inside, but it was already too late.

I opened the curtains, and—

“!?”

It felt like I got hit by a truck. Inside the small changing room, what first caught my eyes was Rouran Academy’s uniform, neatly folded in the corner. Following that, I saw legs enwrapped in long knee-socks. Black and White. The white skin and jet-black kneesocks created a fresh contrast. When I raised my head, standing there was Usami Masamune, wearing faint pink underwear.

“.....”

.....I mean. This order is just messed up—is what I wanted to retort. I mean, why are you putting on knee socks after your underwear? And more than anything, why did you give me the swimsuit when you still haven't finished changing? Maybe she was too flustered because of the situation that she messed up the order of things, or maybe she wanted me to be gone so she could rest easy when putting on her clothes.

Whichever it may be—it doesn't matter. What's important right now is that the blushing Usami's right leg was closing in on the left side of my head, and as I am an adolescent boy, the sight in front of me left me unable to react in time, which is why...

“Guha!?” A groan escaped my mouth.

The second the impact of the leg hit me full force, my consciousness was blasted into darkness.

♀ × ♂

“...Jeez.”

That concludes the flashback. I pressed my hand on the wound I had suffered several days ago, and let out a sigh. This being the case, despite me treating her to lunch, helping with her shopping, and running away from the store in shame, there are absolutely no rumours going around about us dating. Well, looking at the swimsuit shopping incident, that might be for the better.

According to Usami, the [Watch over Committee] is trying its hardest to spot any such information from spreading. Even so, she wanted to go on a date before today's war—today's battle, but I'm honestly already over it. Just end this plan already, so I can explain everything to Konoe.

“Don't be so depressed. I don't why you were fighting with Subaru-sama, but you actually want to make up, right? Let me help you poor fellow.” Kurose showed me a thumbs-up, and smiled brimming with confidence.

Yay, that's what I would expect from my good friend, he's not just

some useless and rotten connection I've known since middle school. Right now, you look like an angel in white.....Did you really think I was thankful for that, you damn nurse. I know exactly what you're planning with this.

"That's why...why don't you introduce me to Subaru-sama as well?"

"I figured."

Normally you'd be suspicious about a guy wanting to be introduced to another guy, but I can guess what he's plotting. He wants to get along with Konoe to then get closer to Suzutsuki. You make fun of me, but you're trying to do the exact same thing, you know. Then again, I bet that's the case for most of the other students, Suzutsuki is like an idol after all.

"No worries. I can make you get closer again. I have a very special plan just for you."

"Be straight with me, you're losing credibility."

After all, this tight nurse actually only has ulterior motives with girls. Normally, I'd decline right away, but...

"...Alright then. I'll go along with your plan." Albeit hesitant, I nodded along.

Honestly speaking, I want to get along with Konoe, and although it was all to protect her secret, I still feel bad. If I can expect help from him, I want to take it, no matter how rotten it may be.

"Alright, that's what I want to hear! Love ya, Jirou!"

"Please, don't say such stuff while looking like that. I'm going to barf." I threw a retort at Kurose, but he just laughed even more.

"Now now, don't you worry! My plan is perfect! You just play along!" Kurose said, and pulled me into the classroom.

Eh? We're going to execute that plan right now? But, wait, there's too many people around.

“Hey, Subaru-sama...No, Konoe. Can I have a second?” Still dragging me along, Kurose called out to Konoe.

The china dress Butler-kun looked towards us, but seeing me immediately averted her gaze again. Ahh, so awkward. This mood is unbearable.

“What? I’m busy serving the customers.”

“Don’t be like that, just come with us to the hallway for a second.”

Subaru-sama clearly emitted an ‘I’m in a bad mood, don’t talk to me’ aura, but Kurose wasn’t bothered by that in the slightest. I think he’s pretty amazing in that. Makes sense that he made it pretty far during the judo nationals in middle school, he really can’t read the mood at all.

“Come on, there’s something I wanna give to you.”

“Wha...what are you doing!”

Kurose forcefully grabbed Konoe’s arm, pulling her along. At the same time, an endless amount of gazes pierced us.

“What is he doing to Subaru-sama...”

“I can kill him, right?”

“Don’t stop me, I will crush that pervert with my own haaaaands!”

Hurry up, Kurose. At this rate, we won’t have a tomorrow to work for. In the midst of the cold gazes ready to kill us at any moment, Kurose managed to drag Konoe into the corner of the hallway.

“What is going on? Why did you drag me out here? Let me be honest, but I’m in a bit of a bad mood right now.” Konoe narrowed her eyes, and gave us a harsh scowl.

That sure doesn’t feel like a bit to me, alright. If anything, I never saw Konoe this disgruntled before, I believe.

“Come on now, don’t be so angry. Jirou said he wanted to make up

with you, okay.”

“.....Hmpf.” Konoe’s translucent eyes turned towards me for a brief second.

Her gaze was as sharp as before, but I could see a faint hope glimmering deep inside of her eyes...Hm? This might actually be going better than I initially anticipated? Alright, you can do it, nurse!

“That’s right. Jirou wants to get along with you, which is why he prepared a present, you know?” Kurose said, and took out a neatly-wrapped package from behind his back.

Where did you even hide that?

“...A present?”

“Indeed. Jirou tried his best when choosing it. Well, he said he was too embarrassed to give it to you directly, so I reluctantly tagged along.”

“J-Jirou...did that...for me...?”

It felt like Konoe’s anger towards me lessened a great bit. Maybe a straight approach like that would have been the best choice from the very beginning?

“Here, accept this. This contains all of Jirou’s feelings.”

“O-Okay...!” Konoe blushed ever so slightly, and accepted the present from Kurose. “C-Can I open it?”

“Of course. You’ll be shocked. I can definitely tell you’ll like it.” With these words, Konoe reached for the wrapper of the present.

She looked like a child on Christmas morning, rushing to open up the presents.

“Y-You’re crazy, Kurose. I have newfound respect for you.” I whispered behind Kurose in a volume where Konoe couldn’t hear me.

“Right? I told you, just leave it to me.” Kurose laughed confidently.

Damn, I never knew he could be so reliable. Before, I half-doubted him because of his track record, but now I feel embarrassed. To think my classmate nurse could be so reliable.

“But, will this be okay? How did you know what he likes?” I was still a bit worried nonetheless.

Just what did he prepare as a present? Even being so confident about it...

“No worries. If you’re a man, you’ll definitely love it.”

“.....”

Right as I heard those words, an awful premonition filled my chest. I feel like we did something horribly bad there. This looked like everything was going along smoothly, but now I was starting to feel like the people on the Titanic, the board captain sending out an emergency broadcast over the radio. And as expected, three seconds later, this bad premonition became reality.

“Kyaaaaaaaaah!?” A girly shriek pierced my ears.

Looking over, Konoe had thrown the present away in a rage. Coincidentally, it landed right in my hands. Shown on it...on the cover of the magazine was a woman with twintails, opened clothes, showing suggestive poses.

“Huh? You didn’t like it?” Kurose was the only person who failed to grasp the situation, and just looked at the porn...excuse me, magazine aimed at adults in my hands in confusion.

“You idiot! What kind of present is that supposed to be!?”

“Huh? What are you talking about. Even Subaru-sama is a guy, right?”

“What if he’s more into delicate stuff!?”

“Eh, that Subaru-sama? I mean, even you are into that stuff, right?”

“Why are you pulling me into this mess!?”

“Huh? You don’t remember? In middle school, you were the one who said ‘I actually like tsunderes’, weren’t you—” That’s how far Kurose spoke, and shut up.

The butler knuckle silenced him. As I had feared, a sharp liver blow rammed right into the nurse. If this was a straight throw in baseball, it might have burned a hole through the fence. Proof of this was the nurse being blown off with a somewhat feminine ‘Agyaba!?', his body landing directly in the girls’ toilet of all places.

“Eh? What was that sound just now...”

“Um, are you okay...Wah, who is this person!?”

“Noooooooo it’s a pervert! He’s wearing a nurse uniform!”

An orchestra of screams filled the inside of the toilet. Thanks to the appearance of the buff nurse, a scene of hell was painted behind those closed doors...Yeah, he should be okay. He’ll probably get out after being beaten up by a cleaning brush. In the worst case, the public morals committee might catch him, but I honestly have worse problems than this.

“...Jirou.”

“Eek!?”

An alto voice filled with pressure practically forced me to turn around, and I was greeted by the dear butler-kun in her china dress, her lips quivering, as her arms shook in anger.

“You supposedly picked this out with all your heart...just for me, right? That’s why, I best be thanking you properly...”

“W-Wait! You’re wrong! Kurose set up all of this! I just wanted to make up with you...!”

In a panic, I put all the blame on Kurose. But in reality, I was the idiot for even believing in him.

“...Hmm. So that’s what it was? But, don’t worry.”

“K-Konoe! So you understand!”

“Of course. I won’t do anything cruel.” She smiled, like she was talking with her master. “In your case, I’ll at least listen to your final words.”

“Wah...Konoe-san!?”

“It’s fine, it’ll all be over soon. Not to mention...You like girls like on that cover, right?”

“Why are you so hung up on that!?”

“S-Shut up! After all...t-that girl had her hair like that as well!”

“That girl...”

“Y-Your girlfriend! She was wearing her hair in twintails!”

“Ah...that’s...”

“Giving me that as a present...Ah, you’re trying to show off, right...!”

Konoe pouted, muttering words like ‘Twintails here...tsundere there’, but I still don’t get it. Why is she so angry? I mean, was she bullied by a tsundere in her previous life or something? At the same time, I heard the hallway growing more noisy. Curious onlookers started to gather around us.

“A cosplay cafe? Not half bad.”

“Hello? Come over here right now! A china dress girl and policewoman are fighting! Not to mention they’re both guys!?”

Voices everywhere, all of them with different emotions. It’s like all the rats came crawling out of their holes. That’s the school festival for you. Everybody’s so excited for some reason. The atmosphere is so different from usual, everyone’s going crazy. Are they getting drunk on this mood or something?

“K-Konoe, just calm down.”

I judged that I had no chance in actual physical combat, so I went for the peaceful preservation.

“Shut up, you normie.”

“N-Normie!? W-Where did you even learn that word from...”

“I read about it in a book before. They call people like you with a lover that way, right. I hate people like that.”

“Konoe...”

“Don’t call my name. I get the creeps if a normie calls me like that. You called it a present...and I was really looking forward to it...”

“.....”

Right. In the end, Konoe is still a girl. She would look forward to getting a present, and get her hopes up. And yet, I just...

“I thought...I would get some strawberry daifuku¹...”

“Why strawberry daifuku!?”

“Because I wanted to eat some since yesterday.”

“How am I supposed to know that!?”

“Jirou...we’re talking about strawberry daifuku, not whiteberry daifuku.”

“I know that!?”

I know that it sounds similar, alright. Still, strawberry daifuku, huh... Konoe really likes sweet stuff. Then again, is there even anything this gluttonous butler does not like?

“Listen, strawberry daifuku is amazing. Add that soft and fluffy feeling from the daifuku together with the sweet red bean jam paste, and the bittersweet taste of strawberries, the inside of your mouth just starts melting...” Konoe showed a relaxed smile, as she explained the greatness of strawberry daifuku.

I mean, it's not like I don't get where she's coming from, but how am I supposed to know about your current interests?

"Anyway, die."

"What do you mean anyway!?"

"Shut up. A normie that won't even give me strawberry daifuku gets an express ticket to heaven. That is my choice as a butler."

And for me, it was the beginning of the end, a declaration of death. Konoe's butler knuckle cut through the air, aiming towards me. Damn it, to think I would be killed while being called a normie of all things. My head was full of regrets, when...

"Will you two give it a rest already?" A dignified voice mixed with anger reached us.

Looking over, the provisional store manager Suzutsuki Kanade came walking towards us, her arms crossed.

"Subaru. Playing around with Jirou-kun is great and all, but do you mind going back to work? If you don't come back soon, it'll probably cause a rebellion."

"Urk..." The butler let out a groan, as her fist hovered in the air directly in front of my face. "However..."

"What? You won't listen to your master's orders?" The young lady showed a gentle smile.

Immediately after, dear Butler-kun let out a shriek, and lowered her fist in an instant. It seems like she must have felt the pressure coming from beyond Suzutsuki's smile. Konoe gave me a final 'Hmpf', and returned to the classroom. Damn it, rather than making up, our relationship has taken a dip for the worse.

"...You saved me, Suzutsuki. Without you, I might have gotten to greet my maker."

"I don't need any gratitude. I'm just trying to keep the class together for our attraction. Well, that'll be over soon as well."

“Over?”

“Indeed. I have some business to attend to, so I have to leave. In the meantime, I’ve asked a few girls to take over.” Suzutsuki explained with her usual calm tone.

I wonder what business she’s talking about? Since it’s about her, she probably will get confessed to again.

“Leaving that aside, Jirou-kun.” Suzutsuki looked over at me. “It looks like you’re on bad terms with Subaru as of late, did something happen?”

“!”

“And, I hear about you being together with a girl from another class a lot. What relationship do you two share? Is she your girlfriend by any chance?”

“Urk...”

Because of the sudden question, I was forced to keep quiet. I was careless. Even that Kurose realized, so there’s no way that this rich lady wouldn’t catch on to things being awkward between me and Konoe. Worst of all, she’s somewhat aware of Usami’s existence. I need to clear up this misunderstanding immediately...

“Well, not like I care.”

Unexpectedly, Suzutsuki immediately cut the conversation.

“You don’t care...what do you mean?”

“Exactly what I said. Unlike Subaru, I know about the fact that you’re just playing lovers.”

“.....!”

...Hey hey hey, are you kidding me. How sharp can you be? Rather than catching on, she’s already aware of everything.

“H-How did you find out?”

“Oh, I was right? I was just betting on the chance, but I guess I was spot on.”

“!?”

“I mean, a chicken bastard with gynophobia would never get a girlfriend this easily.”

“.....”

“If I had to guess, that’s probably the reason why you got on bad terms with Subaru, right? You promised to walk around the school festival with her, but were forced to break that promise...something along those lines?” She seemed to be enjoying herself, her lips raising to form a grin.

...Alright, I don’t think I can ever win against Suzutsuki Kanade.

“Since we’re talking about you, you probably had to agree for some odd reason, but...be careful. I don’t think Subaru will stay quiet about this, even if you already broke your promise.”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“Exactly what I said. That girl can be unexpectedly stubborn, so she won’t back down easily. Well, if you’re in a pinch, then just ask for help.” Throwing some confusing words at me, Suzutsuki walked away with a simple “Bye.”

“...Hm.”

It seems like she decided to stay an onlooker for now. Well, that’d be the best for me as well. If she were to leak that to Konoe, she most definitely won’t stay quiet. Knowing her, she probably would do something to Usami. And then, that whole plan would break down in shambles, with that nasty rabbit putting the blame on me. More than anything, there’s a chance Suzutsuki could try to mess up the plan herself.

I probably should be thankful that she has other business to attend to right now. I just need her to lay low, and—

“...Oh right, Jirou-kun. One thing I don’t understand, would you mind me asking?”

Suddenly, Suzutsuki crossed her hands behind her back, and turned towards me.

“What is it? Depending on it, I might be willing to answer.”

Then again, she pretty much figured it out already. The only piece of information she’s lacking is the whole reason we’re doing this.

“So...” For some reason, Suzutsuki showed a charming smile. “That magazine aimed at adults you’ve been holding for a while now, I was wondering what that title ‘Authentic account! A lewd school festival with a rich tsundere lady!’ was about.”

♀ × ♂

“You’re two minutes and 28 seconds late.”

Usami Masamune stood in front of the school gate, greeting me with as much of a sharp voice as always.

“Zip it, I had my own trouble.”

I seriously did. After what happened, I screamed ‘Don’t joke with me! You’re not even a tsundere!’ at the top of my lungs, to which Suzutsuki responded ‘Should I show you some dere then?’, which made me run away in fear. Devil Suzutsuki, she’s nothing but a devil, alright. Terrifying in way too many ways.

The time had just arrived around noon. We had planned to meet up for a date now. I thought that I still had plenty of time, but I guess that’s the nasty rabbit for you, she has no good bone in her after all.

“Late is late, you stupid chicken.” She stabbed the toe of her long boot into my leg, and let out an exhausted sigh. “You’re not worth anything as a man if you make a girl wait. Are you an idiot? Gonna die? You a chicken?”

“It’s two minutes. That’s about the time it would take to make cup ramen, alright.”

“...Are you even aware of how worried I was during those two minutes?” Usami lowered her head for a brief moment.

Eh? Was she actually worried? Because of two short minutes? Seeing her saddened and lonely expression made my chest tighten up...

“Yup. I was worried you were assaulting another girl and got arrested in the process.”

“I don’t need you to worry about that!”

“Ah, right. I shouldn’t have had to worry, you’re a BLC after all.”

“BLC?”

“Boys-Loving-Chicken.”

“Don’t make that a term!?”

“Now it sounds like a BLT² sandwich...Fufu.”

“Why is that so funny?!”

“It makes me imagine a boy-loving chicken bastard being sandwiched by two guys.”

“Will you shut up already, you perverted rabbit!”

...Damn it, I know I’m doing this to protect Konoe’s secret, but how could I let her have such a misunderstanding about me. I confirmed my surroundings. Luckily, nobody was around to hear that problematic statement. However, on the path leading from the gate to the school building, countless people stood to look at the various stalls. Now that noon had arrived, the school festival started to grow more noisy. No doubt, we’ll be seen by a lot of people like this. Once that rumour about me and Usami dating goes around, things might finally improve.

“Now, let’s move on to the date. We don’t have much time until the event, so we need to make up for the loss we suffered because of you.”

“You sure are annoying, alright. I had to change clothes.”

Just until a few minutes ago, I was a policewoman, you hear me. In the fashion magazine I read yesterday, it didn't say that I should go on a date looking like that.

“I mean, you changed your clothes as well, right?”

What was it, Swimsuit Cafe Passionate Adventure? She can't exactly come out here with a competitive swimsuit, right...

“Eh?”

However, Usami let out a dumbfounded voice, her gaze wandering about...Don't tell me, was she too lazy to change, and just put on her uniform above the swimsuit?

“N-Now, let's go! If we don't hurry up, the festival will end!” Usami urged me, like she was trying to hide something.

...Well, whatever. I'm a bit curious as to what she's wearing beneath that uniform right now, but I shouldn't lose my focus because of that. After all, this odd relationship will end today. Once that final event is over, I'll be freed. And then, I can say goodbye to this nasty rabbit.

“Then, I'm counting on you, Stupid Chicken.”

“Hm? With what?” I wasn't sure what she was talking about, so I returned a question, only to get back a dumbfounded ‘Eh?’ from Usami.

“What are you talking about? When on a date, you have to take the lead, right?”

“Wha?”

“...Hey, what was that ‘Wha?’ about? Don't tell me, you didn't think of anything?” Usami gave me a sharp scowl, silencing me.

Could you blame me, I was too busy with preparations for the crossdressing cafe, I got home late, and it completely slipped my mind then.

“Woah, you’re actually the worst. Have you ever gone on a date before?”

“Wha...Don’t make fun of me! Of course I did!”

That being said, I went to the game center before with Konoe, but it was all set up by Suzutsuki...and same goes for the leisure land.

“What about you then?”

“Eh?”

“Don’t ‘Eh’ me. If you’re making fun of me, you must have gone on a lot of dates, right?” I returned a bothered complaint.

As expected, Usami’s expression froze up with an awkward ‘Wha’, and she started blushing furiously.

“D-Don’t make fun of me, stupid chicken! O-O-Of course I did! I’m brimming with experience!”

“Then why don’t you take the lead? You’ll definitely do better than me.”

“Urk...” Usami’s mouth changed shape into a triangle.

So she really was acting tough after all. Not to mention this reaction, is this actually her first date?

“W-What’s that gaze for! That’s right, this is my first date! What about it!? Everybody would be nervous during their first time!” Usami averted her gaze and tried to act strong.

So it’s exactly as I expected. Also, nervous, huh. Makes sense, looking at her.

“Even if you want a plan or something, the best we can do is walk around the school festival, so let’s just look at the stalls?”

“...O-Okay.”

Having a fight now would only be a waste of time, so I threw in

another proposition, to which Usami nodded...Jeez, if only she'd stay calm, she'd be this cute.

"But, don't think you're better than me now. I'm not listening to you or anything."

"Can you not be quiet for a minute?"

"Are you telling me to be like a dog, just listening to you!?"

"Who said that!"

"Oh hell no, even if you're my boyfriend, I won't walk around the park at night with a collar around my neck!"

"Your fantasies are far too lively, you know!"

We really can't arrive at any common ground. Also, how are her fantasies always this lewd? I get that we're in the middle of our adolescence, but holy moly. Well, leaving that aside, it's time to focus on the date. We lined up next to each other, and walked towards the stalls. Holding hands would probably raise our efficiency a lot, but that would equal to me taking a walk with a death god itself.

Recently I realized that my gynophobia activates much easier when I'm touching another person. That's why holding hands like that is dangerous. If I were to give an example in the world of Jo*o, it would be like 'The Grateful Dead'³.

"Ah, look at that, stupid chicken."

Usami interrupted my thoughts as she grabbed my hand, and pulled me along. Eeek, I can feel the warmth of her fingers directly conveyed on my skin. I can feel goosebumps all over. It sure sets in fast with direct contact. Doesn't help that she's holding my hand so tightly.

"H-Hey, let go."

"What? Are you embarrassed or something?" Even before I could say any further, Usami started grinning. "Huh, really now. This is totally normal on a date, come on come on come on."

“Wah, s-stop it already!”

I tried to resist, but Usami would not let go of my hand, even wrapping her arms around mine, like she was a koala clinging to a tree at a zoo. T-This nasty rabbit, she’s probably using this chance to pay me back for what I did before. Not to mention...Oh man, she’s got more than she originally shows. Her body’s pretty slim, but...in the end, she still is a girl.

She seemed to be satisfied with my suffering, as she rubbed her... body...even more onto me. What kind of heavenly punishment is this? I was fully focussed on making sure my gynophobia wouldn’t grow rampant.

“Look, doesn’t that look delicious?”

Not even knowing of my suffering, Usami nonchalantly gazed at the stalls at our sides. The takoyaki in particular. I’m so jealous, I wish our class would have decided on something orthodox like that. When the delicious scent of the sauce and meat tickled my nose, my stomach started grumbling. Oh yeah, I haven’t had lunch yet.

“Are you hungry?”

“Yup. Are you going to treat me to some?”

“Of course not, you’ll be treating me. I heard before that a man has to pay during a date.”

Again with that? What do you take me for, some kind of sponsor? Also, who did you hear that from if you don’t even have any friends? Maybe juniors from her club?

“Who’d treat you, Usamin.”

“Ehhh, stingy chicken.”

“Say whatever you want~”

“A flightless chicken is just livestock.”

“Of course!?”

“See! Chicken is livestock!”

“I know that even without you telling me!”

“—Chicken!”

“My eyes, my eyeeeee! Will you stop it already!”

She really loves Ghi*li, huh. Also, I’ve always been treating her to the food in the cafeteria, so I really don’t want to waste my money anymore than this. When I protested, Usami pouted.

“Alright then. Once this date is over, I’ll treat you to some homemade food of mine, so pay for it now.”

“What kind of contract is that?”

“Isn’t it fine? I mean, money’s a bit tight...I used a lot of it for the swimsuit...”

“Money’s tight...”

Is she in debt or something? That’s why she asked me to pay for her during lunch or when we stopped at stores in the business district on our way home? Is this some reverse leecher situation that I’m in?

“A lot happened, and I got fired from my part-time job, and I could technically cook, but I don’t have any ingredients...Recently, I haven’t been eating anything worthwhile lately.”

“Worthwhile...so what were you eating?” The curiosity got the better of me, and I asked.

That moment, I could see a shadow dropping over Usami’s eyes, like she was looking down at a dark ocean.

“—Mayonnaise.”

“What?”

“Did you know, stupid chicken? A person once ended up stranded on a mountain, and managed to survive on mayonnaise and water for an

entire week.”

“.....”

“Even the bread from the school cafeteria is pure bliss to me. And so many calories...”

“Enough, Usami. I get it, it was my bad. I’m sorry.” I forcefully cut the conversation.

I feel like I’ve seen a side of her that should never have come to light. I guess Usami Masamune is more of a commoner than I expected. Also, judging from that, is she maybe living alone? Since I’ve been in so much contact with that rich lady and Subaru-sama, two people living in a completely different world from me, it feels fresh having such a girl around. Kureha? Well, the world she lives in is yet again different in a separate way.

If I had to guess, she’d probably not be able to get along with Suzutsuki. From what I heard, the environment they live in is completely different. We’re talking about a rich lady and a commoner. It’s such a faint assumption of mine, but I definitely cannot allow these two to meet. She’ll probably say something like ‘Don’t underestimate commoners’, and see Suzutsuki as a rival.

Well, I don’t dislike confident people for sure. Also, their personalities are pretty much the exact opposite. Suzutsuki would hide her true personality, acting like an unparalleled and perfect beauty, whereas Usami is the opposite. She may be clumsy, but she properly says what she wants, and acts how she wants. Probably even to the point where it would get in the way of her relationships. I seriously doubt that Suzutsuki’s nonsense would work on her.

If so, then—they might just be polar opposites. You have a lying wolf woman, and a nasty rabbit who hates lies: Suzutsuki Kanade and Usami Masamune. All I can ask for is those two to never meet when I’m around...

“Also, I want you to treat me to some food right now. That would be more like a date, right?”

“More like a date, huh...”

Do you want to go on a date that badly? Is she the type of person who writes ‘Ginza No.1 Hostess’ on her future plan survey all to trouble the teacher? Or, does she want to brag about being used to going on a date? Just treating someone to food doesn’t make it a date.

“...I’m sorry, one portion of takoyaki please.”

In the end, I could only order some food for her. I know I’m pretty pathetic for doing this, but if I don’t treat her to some food, she probably will keep clinging to me. She should calm down with a bit of food, right? I feel like I’m feeding a wild rabbit.

“It’s a promise. Remember the equivalent exchange.”

“Leave it to me. I’m confident in my cooking.” Usami said, but could not tear her eyes away from the takoyaki we just bought.

She stabbed a toothpick into one, blew some air on it, and stuffed it into her mouth. Immediately after, her expression melted away in bliss. I stuffed one into my mouth as well. Hmm, not bad. I should have made this a present for Konoe instead of that porn magazine.

“Hey, stupid chicken.”

We walked around without a concrete goal, eating some takoyaki, when Usami spoke up.

“You said that you went on a date before with someone, right...Was it Subaru-sama?”

Function over aesthetics. Rather than listening to the girl next to me, I was too engrossed in my takoyaki, and answered ‘Yes’ without thinking about it twice. Naturally, I immediately regretted it. Think about it, Konoe is a guy in the eyes of everyone at this school, so it’s like I was openly admitting to going on a date with a guy.

I was thinking about how to get out of this situation, when I saw Usami frozen stiff, the takoyaki still in her cheeks. She looked like a squirrel on the hunt for rations for the winter.

“Waah, I can’t believe you. That Subaru-sama went on a date with you? Paid dating?”

As if, she ain’t some celebrity at a host club.

“It’s not that big of a deal. He and I got along pretty well, so we just met outside of school to chill.”

I wasn’t lying. Compared to the first time we met, we were at least a bit closer then. Though, everything was reset right now.

“...Huh.” For some reason, Usami didn’t seem too satisfied with my response.

If anything, she looked more doubtful compared to before.

“It really is weird.”

“What is?”

“I mean, you’re a perfectly normal and average human being. Playing your girlfriend over these past few days, that totally became apparent. If this was an RPG, you’d be ‘Villager A’.”

“Sorry about being normal, okay.”

“Normal...yeah. That’s why it’s odd. How could someone so average like you suddenly get along with Subaru-sama?”

“Even if you ask me that...”

Oh yeah, that was what she asked me when we first met.

—How did you become friends with Subaru-sama?

The answer is simple. I found out about Konoe’s secret, and we became partners in crime. I’m not some special existence at all, nor do I play any special role. It’s just...Konoe always wanted someone she can share this secret with, someone she can be friends with. I just happened to fill that position.

“Why’re you suddenly asking me about that?”

“Isn’t that obvious? I...I really like him after all...” Usami averted her gaze, blushing furiously.

So she’s the same pattern as Kureha, huh. All of them suddenly end up so girly as soon as we talk about Konoe. Where’s that biker atmosphere run off to?

“Well, I get that Konoe’s really cool.”

Even her face is dignified to a point she doesn’t look like a boy at all. Well, she actually isn’t, so that makes sense. But, I can’t blame people for falling for her.

“...That’s not it.” However, Usami denied my words, as she kept her head hanging low. “It’s not about him being cool or not. I don’t particularly like him for his face.”

“Huh? So then, what do you like about him?”

“...Hmpf. I won’t tell you. Not someone who managed to become friends with Subaru-sama despite not being special at all.”

Where did her meek attitude go from just now? Now she’s showing clear hostility towards me. Maybe she does hate me after all.

“I hate you. I absolutely despise you. Even today, I would have preferred to have Subaru-sama at my side.” Or so she said, and yet she pushed a toothpick with takoyaki on it towards my mouth.

“Hm? Is there no octopus in there or something?”

“You stupid chicken. I told you we have to act like lovers.” She said, and tried to forcefully shove the takoyaki into my mouth.

Ahh, I see how this is. She’s trying to act flirty to show off towards the people around us. Still, this is pretty embarrassing. More and more people gathered their attention towards us. Which makes sense, we’re a stupid couple in the middle of a crowd in a crowded school festival.

“H-Hurry up. I’m embarrassed over here.” She spoke with an unusual faint voice, so I guess she must be the same as me.

Well, who wouldn't be doing something like this.

"Also, close your eyes when you're biting on it. Our eyes meeting is too embarrassing."

"Yeah yeah, I get it." I did as I was told, and closed my eyes, simultaneously opening my mouth.

Since she says that she feels embarrassed about meeting gazes with other people, she must not be used to dealing with other people. A few moments later, I felt something soft and tender touching my lips.

"Mm?"

Huh? Did takoyaki always feel like this? I feel like it's much more voluptuous than I remember...

"Mmm!?" My doubt lasted only for a moment.

Immediately after, something warm was stuffed into my mouth. Waah, what is this? It's forcefully being pushed into there. Not to mention that the taste is too weak for takoyaki. Weird, is there even sauce on there?

"Mguh!?"

Even more was stuffed into my mouth. Urk, I'm going to suffocate...I can't breathe. What an awful way of dying this is. Even torture during the middle ages wasn't as cruel. I tried to resist this fate, and bit on the invader.

"...Goh!?"

Gaaaah! Hot hot hot! What is this? It hurts! So hot, and spicy! This definitely isn't takoyaki!

"Y-You wench! What are you doing!"

I coughed violently, and opened my eyes. Immediately after, what I had been biting on fell to the ground. Looking at it, it wasn't even takoyaki, but taiyaki⁴. You tried to stuff all of that into my mouth? Also, the bean jam inside is so red...Wait, that's tabasco! I was

wondering what kind of stall would sell something like this, only to find a large billboard saying 'Fresh blood taiyaki'. How dare you sell something like this?

"Are you some mother bird feeding its children!? I'm not some baby penguin!" I tried to complain as best as I could with my numb tongue.

"Huh, aren't you doing great." A piercing cold alto voice spoke up.

When I directed my gaze towards that voice, I found a sour expression glaring at me, translucent eyes trapping me in their sight.

"K-Konoe! Y-Y-You! What are you doing here!?"

That's right, this is Konoe Subaru. Subaru-sama still wore her china dress like she did before, now crossing her arms as she looked at me in disbelief and anger. Next to her stood Usami, who looked at Konoe with as much shock as I have in my face.

"What about your job!?"

As she's the number one money maker of our cafe, she was given a special shift, so she should be working herself to death right about now. Labor laws? What's that?

"I ran away."

"You ran away!?"

"There is a more wonderful and worthy working place for me in this world."

"Why do you sound like a shut-in who just got fired from their part-time work!?"

"Also, I have no plans of working there without the young lady around. I have much more urgent business than that." Konoe said with a suggestive tone, and pulled closer towards me. "I'll be observing you from now on." She said with a quiet voice.

"Observe...Why would you have to do that!"

“Do you really have to ask that? You might tell that girlfriend of yours about my secret, remember?”

When I protested with a quiet voice, Konoe responded.

“You seem to be pretty close with this girl, right? Walking around with linked arms, eating takoyaki, openly flirting around in public...!”

Crap, so she was following us ever since I left the classroom? In my head, I imagined Konoe following after us while hiding behind a telephone pole. That’s quite the crime there.

“That being the case, I decided to tag along with you two. It’s fine, right? I’m your friend after all, so I have to make sure your relationship is working out for you. That’s my duty.”

“.....”

...It’s over. What she’s saying is all over the place, but judging from my experience with her, Konoe won’t back down no matter what I say. Ahh, I get what Suzutsuki was talking about. There’s no way Subaru-sama would give up that easily. But, I didn’t expect her to forcefully fulfill the original promise like this.

“Y-You stupid chicken! What are you whispering about!” Behind my back, I heard Usami’s whispering reach my other ear.

She must be at a loss with Subaru-sama’s sudden appearance, I bet.

“...Sorry, but I think that Konoe will have to tag along from here on out.” When I told Usami just what was going on, her mouth opened in shock, together with a dumbfounded ‘Eh’.

“D-Don’t joke around like that! That would completely ruin our plan! Do you even know what will happen if—” Usami spoke that far, only to suddenly end up completely quiet.

Konoe’s gaze directed at her robbed her of all words.

“After discussing it with Jirou, we decided that I will be joining you. Please treat me well.”

“Ye...yesh...pwease treat me well...”

What a one-sided game that was. With the Subaru-sama she deeply admired in front of her, Usami could only be quiet like a terrified rabbit.

“Now, let’s go. If we take too much time, the school festival will end.” Konoe said, only to take my hand and start walking.

Eeek, she knows of my gynophobia, and yet...!

“Ah! Wait a second, you stupid chicken!”

At the same time, Usami grabbed my other hand. Waaah, what is this situation! The gazes of everyone around us stabbed my bodies. Now I’m not just flirting with one girl, but I also have Subaru-sama with me, the prince of the school, wearing a china dress. This is more than just crazy, I might be able to ask for money like we were a zoo attraction.

“Here, where do you plan on going?”

“The stall you just visited. I also wanted to try some takoyaki.”

“You wanted to try them...”

Is that your first takoyaki experience? Well, she had her first cup ramen last month, so I wouldn’t be shocked.

“Why would we need to go over there? I still have some I just bought for Usami.”

“...Hmpf, so annoying. I want to have my own share, okay.” Konoe let out a disgruntled sigh, and walked towards the stall.

When we arrived there, the person who just sold us our share looked at Usami and me in confusion. Can’t blame them, the stupid couple they just sold the takoyaki to now come back as three people. Not to mention that we’re all holding hands, it must be weird to look at.

“Hm, so this is takoyaki.” Konoe stared at the machine.

This must be her first time after all, huh. Suddenly, her gaze turned towards me.

“Jirou, treat me to some.” She said it like it was something to be expected.

“Why would I have to pay for you?”

“I forgot my wallet in the classroom.”

“Forgot...so what about that taiyaki just now”

“I was given that by a very kind person on the way here.”

“A very kind person...”

Thinking about the always cold and collected Subaru-sama, there's nobody who would do that. If I had to guess, she probably saw me paying for Usami's takoyaki. I bet she didn't forget her wallet either, just making up stuff on the go. I don't know why, but she seems jealous towards Usami. Does she want to eat takoyaki paid with my money that badly?

“What's wrong? Are you not going to pay for me? Even though you did it for that girl?”

“Urk...”

“Even though this is your fault for breaking your promise.”

“.....”

“Jirouuuu.” Konoe looked up at me, with somewhat dampened eyes.

She looked like a small child begging her parents to buy a toy.

“...Alright, I'll pay for you.” I took out my wallet, and handed the money to the person at the stall.

Of course, my biggest motive was the fact that the sulking Konoe was just so cute...but I'll keep that a secret. Because of that conversation just now, we have gathered attention from the people around us.

“What does he mean by promise?”

“Did he reject Subaru-sama?”

“Then why are they together like this?”

“Is this...a battlefield?”

Ahhh, so many bad rumours in the making! There’s always been the rumour about me and Konoe dating after all. With Usami around, it’ll only grow worse, for sure. After all, I already heard voices like...

“He’s got two girls with him.”

“Calm down, Subaru-sama is a guy.”

“Doesn’t matter. I’m so jealous of him...!”

Hey now, we can always switch if you’re that jealous.

“Over here, Stupid Chicken. Let’s walk around inside the school next.” Usami must have felt similar feelings, as she pulled on my hand.

“Ah...Waif! Font feve me fefind!” Stuffed cheeks full with takoyaki, Konoe came running after us.

Following that, she clung to my arm, almost as if to say that I was not allowed to run away...Ahhh, you idiot butler! Did you forget about my gynophobia or something!? Do you plan on worsening my symptoms!?

“Wha...Why are you clinging to him like that!”

“Silence. Jirou is my friend, and this is perfectly normal for friends.”

“It’s not normal at all! If so, then I also...!”

“Wait, n-not fair! Don’t push yourself onto him like that!”

Usami was still fully intent on spreading a rumour about the two of us dating, whereas Konoe was just unable to accept her, as she had me break my promise with her. The two were tightly squeezing

against me. From an outsider's perspective, it may look like I have two flowers in both hands, but it honestly feels more like marshmallows. At this point, I was simply focussing on not having another nosebleed. My legs were shaking left and right just by walking along the path. Makes me feel like I'm in the final stages of a Sahara marathon.



“This is weird! Why are you this close despite both being boys!

“S-Shut up! I’m Jirou’s friend!”

“I’m his girlfriend!”

“Urk...H-He first promised to walk around the festival with me...!”

“H-Hey, how about we check out some classes now?” I suggested, while trying to gasp for air.

At this rate, I’ll die. Being clung to by girls, I will die a pathetic death. At the very least, I’ll be escorted properly to heaven.

“Hm.” Having heard my words, Konoe stopped in her tracks.

She must have found something she was curious about. Tracing her gaze, I spotted the outside of a classroom, decorated with lots of plush toys. Looking at the billboard, it seemed to be another style of cafe, generally where you would be served by students wearing cat or dog ears and tails. Apparently they’re also selling plush toys.

“.....Mmm.” Konoe stared at the classroom with great interest.

When I looked over, wondering what exactly she thought so interesting of it, I spotted a familiar sheep with sharp teeth in the mix of plush toys—The Silent Sheep. It could only be a reference to that one scientist of that one movie. From what I heard, this surreal design actually is what made it pretty popular, which only sold more plush toys or other goods. I really don’t get trends in this world.

“...Jirou.” Konoe spoke up like a small child asking for sweets, looking up at me.

Yeah yeah, I get it. You’re a big fan of that sheep after all. I’m more than fine with going there, it’ll help disarm this situation. The only thing that had me a bit dubious was the name of the cafe, written on the billboard.

‘Animal Cafe – Agony of Death at 2am in the morning’

What kind of name is that even? That sounds more like a haunted house than anything. With these thoughts, me and Konoe were about to enter the classroom, when—

“...Don’t tell me, is this where...” Usami muttered next to me.

For some reason, she grew pale.

“...Yeah, there’s no mistaking it. This is **their** class. They mentioned they were doing a cafe...”

“.....?”

They? Does she know someone in this class by any chance? I thought something was off, when I suddenly heard the sound of tableware shattering.

“Damn it! You figured me out!?”

With an oddly panicking attitude, a single male student came running out of the animal cafe. He carried a small digital camera in his hands, as he was gasping for air. So...who dis guy? Since this was such an odd sight, I wanted to call out to him, but the screams of pain inside the classroom stopped me from that.

“F-Forget me! It was a sudden impulse!”

“Hey, hurry up and run...Gyaaaah!”

“President! Kumai was done in!”

“Kumai! Pull yourself together!”

“F-Forget about me...Just hurry and...”

“Kumaiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!”

“Damn it, is this hell!? If I can at least render one useless...Gaaaaah!”

“Someone! Someone call the nurse! Please! Where is sheeeeeee!?”

Many more screams of agony reached my ears. Even the boy who had just run out of the classroom now came running back in order to help his allies. However, it didn’t take even a minute for him to collapse on the floor, foaming from his mouth.

—This is a tragedy. Nothing short of a hellish tragedy. I’m terrified to

even look inside that classroom right now. It's like I waltzed right to the West Front during World War 2. Finally, all the noise suddenly vanished, and an eerie silence filled the classroom. It seems like their fight had reached a conclusion.

...Is it safe now? I wanted to take a peek inside to confirm the situation, but...

"Nya? What are you doing here?" A familiar and innocent voice spoke up.

Several male students collapsed inside the classroom. The only person standing there was a small girl with a befitting short-cut hairstyle. She must have been working at this animal cafe, as she had small cat ears, and an adorable tail attached to her uniform. Spotting me, she smiled happily.



“Nyahaha, welcome welcome, Nii-san.”

“...Yo, sorry to intrude.”

That’s right, I was talking about Sakamachi Kureha. No way would I mistake the innocent smile of my little sister, as she stood in the classroom.

♀ × ♂

“You see, a guerilla force of the photography club snuck in here.”

The tragedy had ended, so Kureha saw it as her duty to explain what exactly had occurred.

“And then, they started taking lewd pictures of the girls. So, I gave them some ‘Baaaah!’ on the way.”

“Not just ‘Baaah!’...you absolutely obliterated them.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine. I only did what I do every morning to you, Nii-san.”

Ah, that? Well, they all got carried off to the infirmary with a stretcher, so I can only pray they don’t suffer any after-effects. Still, to think this animal cafe was the attraction of her class. Looking around, a lot of the plush toys were of the Silent Sheep category. Not to mention that there’s not only plush toys, but also mugs and cups and all that, and the students serving customers were wearing in-theme costumes. What kind of specialized shop is this?

“Waaah...” Konoe’s eyes were sparkling in excitement, as she looked at all the sheep goods around us.

I can’t blame her, it’s like paradise for Konoe.

“Crazy, right? Our class president brought all of this with her. She’s the daughter of the company president who manufactures this sheep.” Kitten Kureha explained, as she tightly embraced the plush toy.

Huh? Wasn’t she bad at dealing with that character?

“Hey, you were bad with this occult stuff, right?”

“Yeah, but...this child is different.”

“Excuse me?”

“I don’t know why, but it suddenly looks so cute to me. It’s in a boom

right now. Everyone thought ‘We definitely need to buy it!’, you know.”

“Huh...”

Brainwashing? There’s also a chance that she was drugged with some visual perception drug. If not, then I cannot think that such a weird thing could ever experience any boom.

“Also, are you actually serving the customers? Onii-chan’s really worried that you’re just slacking.”

She was standing on top of a mountain of corpses after all. Also, how are all the customers just ignoring that slaughter that just happened? Is my little sister even properly working here?

“Nya, no need to be so rude. Our class is properly working. We even have a manual for serving customers.”

“Really now? Then, tell me about the 5th item of that.”

“Um...’Tell them that all merchandise was made in Japan’.”

“.....”

“Huh? Was it ‘In the case of attempted theft, carry them to the back of the school building, and make them regret being born’ instead?”

“Enough. I fully understand what working mentality this class here has.”

What an awful class. I bet they charge you crazy prices as well.

“Ahh, but that class representative girl told me about the top 3 ranks of most-selling sheep goods. For example...that ‘Sheep hugging pillow’, which ranked in at Nr. 3!” Kureha pointed at a nearby big Silent Sheep. “By the way, she even received grateful comments from people who bought it.”

“Grateful comments?”

“For example, with that pillow...”Thanks to this pillow, I can sleep

like a sheep at night' or 'I use it as a stress-reliever by punching it from time to time' and 'I can't even get any sleep without this pillow', and so on."

"I feel like... I should probably ignore those comments since they must be the minority?"

"Ranking at Nr. 2 is this 'Sheep Straw Effigy'."

"What does that have to do with sheeps!?"

"Here, the comments say stuff like 'Thanks to that, my grades drastically improved' or 'I got my fortune much faster than expected' or 'An unprecedented tragedy in my tribe happened, so I'm really thankful', and so on."

"Scary! Also, is that last person actually living in our day and age!?"

"And...as for the top spot of the sales...We have the beloved 'Sheep Chainsaw'!"

"What is going on with recent trends!?"

"Eh, you don't know? It's popular with all high school girls right now."

"As if! I'd hate it if girls my age were into this sort of stuff!"

"As for the comments...'I made it through a troublesome rehabilitation' or 'Shigeru-kun finally started going to school again' or 'Being alive...is wonderful, isn't it', and many more."

"And you don't even feel like asking what they did with that chainsaw!?"

"...Nii-san, I know it's hard, but this is modern Japan..."

"I actually want to die!"

"...You two really are unexpectedly close for being siblings." Usami showed a wry smile as she stood next to us.

No, most definitely not. No matter how close we may seem right now, all of that will be wasted the second she's training her wrestling moves on me again.

"Nyahaha, I'm surprised as well. To think Usamin-senpai knew Nii-san."

"...Sakamachi. How many times do I have to tell you to drop that nickname?"

"Oh come on, don't be so uptight. Aren't we close enough to call each other by nicknames?"

"Ah, hey...Stop! Stop, I said...Hya!"

"Nya nya nya? Your skin is so slippery, Usamin-senpai!"

"Hya...idiot...Stop...D-Don't touch me there...!"

I was given a scene of Kureha clinging to Usami, who tried her best to shake her off. What kind of softcore p—wrestling is this? Also, even Kureha doesn't know the rumour about me and Usami dating? I guess her plan really isn't working out...

"Will you stop it already, you damn junior!"

"Wahh, you don't need to get so angry. Usamin-senpai, you often skip practice, so I can't even meet you that often! Even though you're so strong."

"Strong...Aren't you much stronger than me? You're above me in the club ranking."

"Well, not wrong, but when it comes to kicking, I definitely lose. It must be a problem of senses. If it comes simply to kicking, you're probably the strongest in the entire club, Usamin-senpai." Kureha smiled innocently, and moved away from Usami.

Oh right, these two were in the same club—The Rouran Academy handicrafts club. Seriously, what kind of club is that? I heard about their regular club work, but they're pretty active, huh.

“Anyway, Nii-san, I’ll have to go bring in some more customers, so you have fun.”

As I was thinking about that, Kureha waved her hand at me, and left the room. Even if you tell me to have fun, I’m not interested in all these plush toys. Even more if this is a sheep we’re talking about.

“You two really are close. I feel like she might just call you ‘Onii-chan’ at home.”

“As if. I’d die if she called me in such an embarrassing way.”

Then again, she did call me like that a long time ago. But, now it’s too embarrassing.

“Also, aren’t you on pretty good terms with Kureha as well? She’s your junior at the club, right.”

“...No, that’s not it. She’s just cheerful and close with everyone.”

“...? Are you not good with Kureha?”

Kureha can be a bit too energetic after all. I might just be fine with her personality, but the same might not be the case for Usami.

“Rather than that...I’m jealous.”

“Jealous...of Kureha?”

“Pretty much. I mean, she can live honestly, not worrying about a thing. Always brimming with energy, always straightforward. How could I not be jealous of that. She’s not as twisted as me, and not nearly as doubtful.”

“.....”

“That’s probably the point I’m most jealous about. Unlike me, she can actually put trust into the people around her. It’s not like I was constantly worrying about that, but if I had a personality like your little sister, living would be so much more enjoyable, I bet. Also, the same goes for having such a friendly family like you...” Usami muttered with a saddened tone.

...I didn't think she'd be this hung up on it. That she has the tendency to not be very honest with herself and the people around her.

“.....”

That reminds me, how did she even end up this way? I don't think that she hates me, and thus doesn't put faith in me, I rather think that she must have a different reason.

“Well, anyway. Why don't you check out the stuffed toys with Subaru-sama?”

“What's that about? What about the plan?”

I thought that spreading rumours about me and Usami dating would be harder now that Konoe joined us...

“It's enough. We only have a bit longer until the event, so whatever we do, it won't do anything now. Also, since you're friends with Subaru-sama, I just feel like I'm getting in the way.”

“.....”

“If anything, I'm tired. Don't think there's any meaning to going on this date anymore. In the end, I didn't earn anything. Man, I'm tired.”

“...Usami.”

“Don't be getting depressed now. Just to let you know, but my feelings for you haven't changed at all. I still hate you, and I don't plan on losing at the event.”

“...Zat so.”

Jeez, that nasty rabbit. Really, only her looks are what's cute about her.

“Alright, then I'll be chilling with Konoe.”

“Yup, all good. I don't think **she's** around anyway.”

“...She?”

When I returned the question, Usami gave me a brief ‘Nothing, just me talking to myself’, and walked away. Oh yeah, before she said ‘their class’, right. Maybe Kureha isn’t the only friendly face she has in this class?

With these thoughts in my head, I walked towards Konoe, who was still busy inspecting all the Silent Sheep in the vicinity. Still, this is some crazy number. I think that classmate is the daughter of the manufacturer’s company president? Honestly speaking, this is more than just eerie. It’s like I’m watching a ghost TV show.

“Senpai.”

“Woah!?”

Suddenly, someone called out to me from the side, which had me jump in shock. When I looked over in shock. There, I was greeted by a Silent Sheep costume. Wahh, it’s bigger than I expected. Seeing a sheep like that big move felt almost eerie. I would probably die from a heart attack if something like this assaulted me at night. Not to mention...’Senpai’? Does it know me?

“Ummm...Been wanting to meet you for a while, Senpai.” The Silent Sheep grabbed my hand, and tightly squeezed it.

From that voice...I’m dealing with a girl? Not to mention that she sounded fairly grown-up despite being younger than me.

“Who are you?” I asked the costume.

As a result, the costume politely lowered its head towards me.

“—Nakuru. Nakuru’s name is Narumi Nakuru. She is a first-year in the handicrafts club, just like Kureha-chan, and the class president of this class. Ah, you can call Nakuru by her given name ‘Nakuru’. By the way, Kureha-chan calls Nakuru ‘NaruNaru’...”

“I”

Narumi Nakuru...A member of the handicrafts club like Kureha and Usami...? Is this the person Usami was talking about before? My head was filled with doubts, to which the girl called Nakuru continued

with a ‘But, you can call Nakuru however you want’.

“Nice to meet you, Sakamachi Kinjirou-senpai. Let Nakuru introduce herself. Nakuru is the president of the ‘Watch over Subaru-sama with a warm gaze committee’—Narumi Nakuru.”

♀ × ♂

“The Watch over Committee!? Not to mention...president...”

“Shhh. You shouldn’t scream in such a loud voice. Usami-senpai will catch on, right over there.”

The costume...No, Nakuru covered my mouth with her large hand. Looking over, Usami was ordering something to drink at a nearby table, and Konoe’s gaze was still glued to Silent Sheep around. I don’t think she’ll catch on to us...

“See, Usami-senpai is a part of [S4], remember. Nakuru is the president of the [Watch over committee] so...we’re not on the best terms. Ever since middle school...”

“Middle school?”

“Yes. In reality, Nakuru and Usami-senpai were in the same karate club back then. Ever since then, she hated Nakuru...” Nakuru’s costume body lowered its head in dejection.

Because of the costume, I couldn’t properly look at her face, but I guessed that she must be a docile girl. But, karate? She must be experienced then.

“Not to mention that Nakuru hates this position as the committee president. But, when she created the [Watch over committee], everyone said how nice she was. Nakuru simply wanted to draw some manga...”

“Manga?”

“Have a look if you want to.” She said, and took out a sketchbook from the costume’s chest pocket.

So it's built like a kangaroo. When I flipped over the pages, I saw a boy wearing glasses, and another boy who had the beautiful face of a girl. Hmm, the drawings aren't half bad. I kept looking, and flipped over the pages—Suddenly the scenery changed with fluttering petals, and the two boys were naked. Not to mention that they were out of breath, showing exhausted expressions, as they embraced each other. No matter how I look at this, these guys are modelled after Konoe and me.

“Fufu, what do you think? Nakuru figured that this would be able to satisfy you, Senpai. Would you like to enjoy it thoroughly with a glass of coke maybe? Nakuru is bad with carbohydrates, so she'll take some orange juice, and...Ouch!?”

I slapped the sketchbook right onto Nakuru's head. I was careless. Even if she seemed docile and calm, she's a member of the [Watch over Committee]—not to mention the president—so of course she's fully into any kind of BL regarding me and Konoe. Not to mention that she's a member of the handicrafts club. Of course she had to be some kind of weirdo.

“Urk...Sorry...Nakuru is sorry...” She said, while rubbing her head.

Hm? She apologized fairly honestly to my surprise. Maybe I hit her too hard? I thought it would be fine because of her costume.

“Rest assured. Next time, Nakuru will draw something that will definitely satisfy Senpai.”

“I should have hit you harder after all!”

“Eh? Was the situation not good enough? Nakuru thought it was pretty fresh, but...Maybe some swimming competition full of butlers?”

“What awful situation is that supposed to be!?”

“As for the story...A swimming competition with the prize being Senpai's glasses. In order to take back your glasses, Subaru-sama helps you, and accepts the challenge. But, Senpai can't pull off everything because he's missing his glasses...Then, Subaru-sama

comes in to save the day, saying ‘Jirou, I will become your glasses’ while blushing...”

“Why are you this fixated on my glasses!?”

Ahhhh, there’s so many parts to retort on, I can’t choose which one! Crap, this Narumi Nakuru is big trouble, even compared to the folks I recently encountered.

“Eh? What are you saying? Talking about Senpai, you can’t forget about the glasses.”

“Was my character always this weak!?”

“Yes. Without your glasses, the [Watch over Committee] would probably not have been formed. A lot of people at this school are glasses fans, including Nakuru.”

“.....”

Is that really it...I mean, I thought it was weird. Leaving aside Subaru-sama, why would I, an average guy, be targeted like this? So it’s all these glasses’ fault...

“Maybe I should switch to contacts...” I muttered with no particular seriousness, but Nakuru let out a loud ‘Excuse meeeeeee!?’ scream.

Following that, she started shaking like the world was about to end.

“How foolish! Do you plan on selling your soul to the devil, Senpai!?”

“You’re exaggerating.”

“Of course not! To Nakuru and the others, contacts are like a cursed item! Laser techniques are a ritual of black magic!”

“Even if you say that...So then, are you wearing glasses as well?”

Because of the costume, I had no way of telling, but since she’s that adamant on it, I’m expecting her to wear glasses.

“Of course. Nakuru is properly wearing them beneath this costume.”

“I figured as much.”

“If anything...Nakuru is only wearing glasses and underwear beneath this.”

“What do you mean by that!?”

“Eh? Exactly what Nakuru said. She’s wearing...nothing but that inside this costume...” She tried to suppress her embarrassed face (despite her costume hiding that already), and said so with an awfully flustered tone.

I mean, even if you suddenly get embarrassed, this is...Wait, why would she even embarrass herself like that...

“N-Nakuru is embarrassed herself! But, this is all for her work.”

“Work?”

“Nakuru is the type who can’t write without experiencing it herself. That’s why, for the sake of her next work, Nakuru wanted to understand the feelings of Senpai, who tried his best for his beloved Subaru-sama, while wearing nothing but glasses and underwear in a costume, so she dressed herself like...Ouchies!?” I flipped my fingers on Nakuru’s forehead in order to stop her passionate rambling.

...S-She’s a pervert. Not just a weirdo, she actually is a deviant beneath that docile atmosphere of hers.

“Urk...How cruel. Even if you’re jealous of Nakuru’s appearance, you can’t just do that...”

“Who’s jealous?”

“You’re not...Ah?! Are you actually wearing underwear beneath your uniform!?”

“Of course I am!?”

It’d be hell a bad if I didn’t. Don’t just decide that I’m not on your own, alright.

“Hey, what do you like about glasses? They’re just in the way. If I didn’t have bad eyesight, I wouldn’t be wearing them.”

“Wha...how could you say that! Glasses are the symbol of human evolution and culture! Do you not know of that famous person’s saying!”

“Saying?”

“Yes, someone very important said that...” Nakuru sighed, and. “If you don’t have bread, just put on glasses!”

“...”

No, that doesn’t resolve anything. Glasses alone won’t save you from starvation. What an awful saying that is.

“Alright, I get it. You love BL and glasses. But, what does the great president want from me?”

Did she come here to gather material? If so, then I should probably head over to either Konoe’s or Usami’s place. I really don’t feel like playing along with her nonsense.

“Nakuru has something very important to talk about with Senpai.” She suddenly dropped her tone, indicating that this was rather serious. “—Please run.”

“Huh?”

“Nakuru wants you to evacuate from this school festival. The secret war between the [Watch over Committee] and [S4] will begin soon. It’ll be the greatest battle to date. Depending on the result, you may be in danger.”

“.....”

Um...is this what Usami talked about? Something about me being sanctioned if [S4] wins? But, didn’t she promise to guarantee my safety?

“Let Nakuru be honest with you.” She must have guessed that I was

uncertain, because she continued. “Nakuru doesn’t know what Usami-senpai told you, but it would probably be better to not put too much faith in her.”

“...What do you mean?”

“...Ah, please don’t get so angry. Nakuru doesn’t want to talk badly about Usami-senpai, but this is for your sake. You two are often together as of late, right?”

“Not wrong.”

“As a result of that, there’s a rumour about you two dating going around inside the [Watch over Committee]. However, that alone won’t shake the committee. Nakuru and the others believe in Senpai and Subaru-sama after all.” Nakuru said, beaming with confidence.

I mean, I really don’t want you to believe in this alleged BL relationship that we apparently share, okay.

“From how Nakuru sees this, Usami-senpai probably came to you with a trade, right? By spreading the rumour of you two dating, the [Watch over Committee] will fall apart, right? In return, you have your guaranteed safety...or something like that?”

“Hm...”

Since she was perfectly on-point, I was at a loss for words. To my surprise, she was pretty sharp in regards to that. Just like a certain rich lady, she had good senses. I might be able to respect her if she wasn’t some pervert who loves glasses and BL.

“But, that’s a mistake.”

“A mistake?”

“Yes. Please, listen carefully. The fact that your safety will be guaranteed—most likely is just a lie Usami-senpai made up.”

“...What?”

...No no no. What is she talking about?

“In the beginning, Nakuru’s [Watch over committee] was a part of the [S4]. We split up because of our differences in interests, but we were a single unit before. That’s why Nakuru can tell.”

“...What exactly?”

“That...you are being deceived by Usami-senpai. After all, there’s no way that Usami-senpai can guarantee your safety, Senpai.”

“!”

No way? What, why? So according to her, Usami won’t be able to keep me safe even though I helped her?

“Nakuru just told you, right. She had been in [S4] for a while. That’s how she knows. What kind of position Usami-senpai has.”

“Position?”

“Yes. Usami-senpai simply wanted to know more about Subaru-sama, which is why she joined [S4], but she didn’t try to get along with the other members. It pains Nakuru to say it, but...her evaluation inside the group isn’t the best.”

“.....”

If so...if what Nakuru is saying turns out to be true, then what was that contract...that promise we shared about. She said that she could influence the top of [S4]. Those were her words. So...what if that was all just Usami’s lie?

“Basically, Usami-senpai alone cannot get control of [S4]. So, if [S4] were to win, there’s no mistaking that you will suffer from the result. That’s why—”

—Hurry and run, is probably what Nakuru wanted to say, but she wasn’t allowed to finish her sentence. A flying kick had Narumi Nakuru fly off to the side.

“Hauuu!?”

Together with a shriek, she rolled along the floor. Luckily, she was

wearing that fluffy costume, I can hope that she's not injured inside. That's why, what I should instead focus on...

"You messed it up, Nakuru." A cold and piercing voice spoke up.

Looking over, I saw a single female student standing in a kicking position, her twintails shaking through her motion: Usami Masamune. She glared at the girl she had just kicked with no remorse.

"I was careless. To think you'd be hiding inside that costume. I realized too late."

"Urk...Usami-senpai..." Nakuru tried to stand up.

However, because of the pain and the big costume, she had trouble doing so. At the same time, Usami let out a sigh, and turned towards me.

"So, what did she tell you, stupid chicken. Something about me deceiving you by any chance?"

"Usami...you..." I was confused to say the least.

Usami must have seen this, and laughed in a somewhat cynical tone.

"...Sorry, stupid chicken. Everything that you heard from Nakuru is true. I've been deceiving you from the very start. I just have to win at this event no matter what. As long as I can, everything else doesn't matter."

That moment, Usami's right leg shot up. Another kick was coming. The same sharp kick that slammed into Nakuru just now. Kureha said that she would lose against her when it comes to kicking. I can see that. I heard she was part of the karate club, but I think this is...self-taught. Right as I reached that conclusion, Usami's right leg was about to stab into my solar plexus.

"!?"

Right before it reached my body, a hand stopped Usami's leg, leaving her shocked.

“What...is this about?” A threatening alto voice rang out.

That’s right, it was Konoe Subaru. She must have caught on to the ruckus, and intercepted Usami’s kick.

“...Urk!” Usami grit her teeth, and ran out of the cafe.

“.....”

What is this? Why would she suddenly do a complete 180 like this? Don’t joke with me. Was she actually deceiving me this entire time? Also, why is she so desperate to win...Does she have another reason besides crushing the [Watch over Committee]?

“Jirou...What is this about?” Konoe watched Usami run off, and turned towards me.

I can’t blame her. In her eyes, my girlfriend just suddenly attacked me. That’s why I should probably tell her the truth, but...

“.....”

Silence. I couldn’t open my mouth towards Konoe’s question. What should I do? Even if I was deceived like Usami and Nakuru said, I should just explain the situation to Konoe. Then, if I did that, we might be able to make up again. But...

“...!”

That would require me to confess about me being deceived. I lied to her about dating Usami, and even broke our promise. Just thinking about that had me hesitate for a moment. Can I really tell her the truth...

“...Okay. If you don’t want to tell me, then I won’t force you.” Konoe must have sensed my hesitation, and spoke up with a calm voice.

“However, at least explain to me what is going on right now. That girl just now talked about some event?” Her translucent eyes were looking directly at me.

I...don’t think I can pull this through.

“This event is talking about your fanclub. You probably don’t know, but there’s two big groups fighting here at this school, with some who resent the fact of us becoming friends. If these guys won then...I apparently would be in danger.” I explained the bare minimum.

In response, Konoe nodded.

“I also...knew of people who don’t think too well of you, Jirou. But, I didn’t think there would be something like this going on...So then, what should we do?” She asked.

“Well...”

“Should we watch over this event in silence, or should we think of what to do if that group were to win, and run away? But, would running away really clear things up?”

“.....”

...Right. Even if I ran away, [S4] is a group here at this school. As long as I’m a student attending this school, I can’t run away forever. If so—I should probably work together with the [Watch over Committee] and ensure their victory.

“...Nakuru. Is there anything we can help you with?” I turned towards Nakuru, who somewhat managed to get up.

This upcoming event apparently is big enough to be called a war. I’m sure it must be hell to participate in. Now that I know of Usami’s promise having been a lie, if there’s anything I can do, I want to help. Nakuru listened to my words, and thought about it.

“...Nakuru understands. Basically, you want to help her with their battle. Personally, she probably would have recommended you to run, but she is thankful for your help. However...”

“However?”

“There is one request Nakuru has.” She said with an oddly serious tone. “Nakuru wants you to fondle Subaru-sama’s breasts, Senpai.”

“.....”

.....Now hold up. Am I just hearing things, or did she completely shatter all seriousness this situation had?

“The thing is...Nakuru has been in a bit of a slump recently. There is this one scene in her new work, where Senpai gets flustered because of a female transfer student. Subaru-sama gets jealous because of that, puts pads into his chest, and says ‘Look, Jirou, I’m a girl myself’, to which Senpai fondles his che...Unya!?”

Both Konoe and I rammed our fists onto her head.

“Auuu...How cruel, being hit by the both of you...”

“Shut up! It’s because you were talking nonsense!”

“B-But, is it really? If you were boy and girl, it would be counted as sexual harassment, but you are both guys, so it would be nothing but simply body touching, right.”

“Wha...”

S-She’s not wrong.

“Also, Subaru-sama, you’ve put in pads right now, haven’t you? Nakuru can see your chest bulking through the china dress. Not to mention that they look pretty real, like some Hollywood-level of make-up. You put so much effort into it, so a bit of touching wouldn’t hurt, right?”

“...Pads?” I subconsciously glanced over at Konoe.

There, I could see her chest sticking out...But, isn’t that weird? Normally, she’s wearing a corset to...

“...Ah!?”

Then, I realized what was going on. This china dress was designed to show your chest. So, if she wore her corset, people would be able to see it, which is why she couldn’t put it on today. Not to mention that she can’t even wear a bra, as that would just be weird for a male butler...

“.....”

Crap, why is my heart racing like this.

“C-Come on, hurry up. It’s not hard. That will help with Nakuru’s inspiration!” Nakuru rushed us even further.

Damn, she’s kinda gross.

“Urk...”

At the same time, Konoe started blushing, not saying a word. I can’t blame her. If she were to protest now, Nakuru might become suspicious of her being a boy. Worst case, she might just catch on to her being a girl. I’m the same here. Any weird hesitation could be misinterpreted.

“.....”

Guess...we can only do it, right. I don’t think my gynophobia should activate if I touch her above her clothes. It only has to be for a brief moment. This is all to protect Konoe’s secret, there’s nothing lewd behind this.

“.....!”

Konoe and I slowly moved towards each other. With a quivering hand, I reached towards the blushing butler. Then, it touched the red china dress...**Squeeze.**

“...Mm!” A moan rang out.

It was a cute moan, who managed to escape Konoe’s lips despite her trying hard to hold back.

“...Faah.”

The second I heard this second moan, I reflexively pulled back my hand. I think the whole act lasted maybe three seconds. However, that soft sensation still remained on my hand, whether I wanted to admit it or not.



“Fufu, thank you very much. Now, you two can participate in the event. Really, what a wonderful day this...Hanya!?”

Blushing Konoe’s butler knuckle rammed right into the costume’s face. She sure has guts, alright...is what I was thinking in my naivete, but immediately after, another fist approached my face...Well, I guess that would happen. I should have expected to not get off this easily.

“Bugha!?”

Another butler knuckle slammed right into my face. Resulting from this, my nose started bleeding. In the end, I had to suffer from a nosebleed, even if it wasn't because of my gynophobia. Sadly enough, I didn't regret anything. After all...you know? As a boy, you should get what I'm playing at, right?

1 Rice cake stuffed with bean jam

2 Bacon, lettuce, tomato

3 https://jojo.fandom.com/wiki/The_Grateful_Dead

4 Fish-shaped pancake with bean jam

Chapter 4: Pivot of War

This might be a bit sudden, but our Rouran Academy has two gym halls. One is always used during our P.E. class, which had been built years before we started attending this school, making it new and shiny. The other one is the old gym hall. Because the new gym hall has been built, this one practically lost its use. On top of that, this apparently was built upon a graveyard, so the reason they haven't demolished it yet is simple because of fear about curses and bad fortune resulting from that. In short, it wasn't used anymore, but also couldn't be destroyed—that is the former gym hall. And now, a gathering happened there.

“Senpai, over here.” Nakuru, who was still wearing a Silent Sheep costume, guided Konoe and me along the way.

Because the windows had been blocked off, the inside of the building was dark, with no sunlight to reach in there, and the only way to see weren't electronic lights, but small lights on the floor and walls. On top of that, the members present were talking to each other here and there, wearing snow white robes, together with white triangular hoods that had two small round openings for the eyes. I feel like I stumbled upon some evil cult or underground mafia...I wonder if Usami is somewhere in here.

“How many members are there in total?”

“Nakuru doesn't know the accurate numbers, but... we're at least more than 100. However, here are the few selected members of both the [S4] and the [Watch over Committee] that were chosen for this event. We can't have the entire two groups gathered here after all.”

That's the two main forces of Subaru's fan club for you. To think they even reached staff, otherwise they wouldn't be able to create such a meeting.

“.....”

Walking behind me, Konoe (naturally all in white) didn't utter a

single word. I can't blame her, this is a meeting of people who all are passionate fans of her. It must be hard to swallow. I'm glad we had these clothes ready. If people found out that Subaru-sama was right here with them, they would probably destroy the entire building. Same goes for me, if they knew I was watching them, I'd probably be killed.

"We've arrived. Please have a seat over here." Nakuru pointed at two empty seats.

We sat down, and observed our surroundings again. Just like old West-East Germany, the former gym hall was clearly split into two areas. It must be the [S4] and [Watch over Committee]. Both sides were equipped with many tables and chairs.

"Looks like they're about to have some giant debate."

Some buttons were on the various tables as well, making me feel like I was watching some quiz show.

"During the event, it's forbidden to cross that line. Otherwise, mindless bloodshed would begin."

"Hmm. Still, I'm shocked you had seats open for us. The number of participants was limited, right?"

"Yes, Nakuru just planned two more seats, because it would be better if Senpai and Subaru-sama were with us."

Hmm, that's the [Watch over Committee] president for you. From what I heard, she's a very charismatic presence inside the committee, and all members are passionate fans of her doujins or something like that.

"What about you Senpai, are you fine leaving the class cafe you were doing?"

"...Ah."

Crap, I totally forgot. My shift is about to begin. Not to mention that Subaru-sama is here with me, will they even make any business?

“...Hm?”

There, my phone vibrated in my pocket. Talk about the devil. On the display, it showed the name Kurose Yamato. Ahh, thank god. He's still alive. He's been away ever since he was kicked into the girls' toilet. With these thoughts, I accepted the phone call.

‘Hello!? Jirou!’

Kurose's somewhat panicked voice greeted me. For some reason, he was out of breath.

“Y-Yo, Kurose, what's up? Should I not have skipped work after all?” I answered in a quiet voice that the people around me wouldn't be able to hear me.

Then again, I can't just go back to the classroom now. I need to think of an excuse.

‘No, it's fine. Don't come back.’

“Hm? What's wrong? Is there some ruckus going on?”

After all, their shining star Subaru-sama is gone, so I guessed that maybe some customers felt like they got cheated out of their money, and turned into an angry mob.

‘...Yeah, something like that might have been better after all.’ Kurose said, surprising me.

Might have been better? What's going on? What is happening in our class that could be more terrifying than an angry mob?

“W-What happened?”

I felt a terrible premonition, and asked with a quivering voice. In response, Kurose responded with a single sentence.

‘—The real ones appeared.’

“...HUh?”

'I'm saying that the real deal got here! I don't know where they heard the rumour from, but those who wear women's clothing for a living made their way to us!'

"Women's clothing for a living...Don't tell me!"

The reality that was explained to me by my classmate was too shocking, I felt dizzy. I can't believe it. Even if this is a cosplay cafe, I didn't think that the real deal would arrive...

"Why? What do they want with our class?"

Maybe they want to crush a rivaling store? No, that would be weird. After all, we're only a business for today.

'...To draft.'

"Draft?"

'Yeah, though I guess calling it headhunting would be more accurate. They started a drafting meeting in the middle of the classroom without even asking for our consent. Several people have already been taken away...!'

"T-Taken away...!?"

'Haha, it's no joke. I didn't think that I would experience such an extreme job hunting in my student days.' Kurose laughed, devoid of any energy. "The customers and the other girls somehow managed to escape. However, the exit was closed off for us men before we could make it out. That's why...we've chosen an honorable death over endless slavery.'

"Wha...Don't tell me!"

Stop! There's no way you can win! You'll only lose your life in battle!

'Arrivederci, Jirou! Take care of Subaru-sama!'

"K-Kuroseeeee!"

I could see Kurose wearing a tight nurse uniform as he jumped into

the enemy army with a roaring ‘Uooooooooh!’ in the back of my head. However, I shortly after heard a weak ‘Ah, no, stop...Ah...Ahhh...!’, and the call was cut.

“...Damn it!”

Farewell, my friend. I won’t waste your sacrifice. I’ll...I’ll definitely live my life to the fullest! For your sake as well! I gave my farewell to my trusted friend, and wiped away the passionate tears running down my cheeks.

“...Jirou, are you okay?”

Konoe’s voice pulled me back to reality. Looking over, she gave me a concerned gaze.

“You were looking like you were lamenting over something...If you’re not careful, people will find out that it’s us.”

“R-Right, sorry. A lot just happened.” I dropped my tone of voice a bit, and responded.

It’s true that because of that call just now, I’ve been gathering a bit of attention from the people around me. Just as Konoe said, if they figured out that it’s us, things will end terribly. I might be killed for real. So, I need to stay silent...

“Ah, please have a look at the schedule, it’s about to begin.”

“!”

When I looked over at the stage, the spotlights turned on. Standing atop the stage was another person wearing a white robe like us, but for some reason they weren’t wearing a hood like we were, but the mask of a sheep...of the Silent Sheep. When that person appeared, the surroundings grew silent in an instant.

“...That person is the founder of [S4], and its leader.” Nakuru whispered with a quiet voice.

It was an awfully silent voice, but she must be worried of being heard in this silence around us.

“When Subaru-sama enrolled at this school, many different fanclubs were founded, but the one who stood above all and united them was the leader of [S4]...However, even they couldn’t stop the rupture that caused the creation of the [Watch over Committee].”

“So that’s why this event is going on right now.”

“Indeed. They rarely appear on stage. Even when it comes to organizing the [S4], they mostly use phone calls or emails, so the fact that they stand on that stage right now just shows how much they don’t want to lose.”

“....”

Fine by me. The one standing up on that stage is the enemy’s leader. And to me, they are my mortal enemy. As long as they don’t lose during this event, my safety at this school is not guaranteed.

“Huh. No clue who they are, but I’m not going to lose.” I muttered a quiet, yet motivated voice.

However...

“Eh?” For some reason, Nakuru let out a dumbfounded voice. “W-Wait a second, Senpai. No clue who they are...What are you saying?”

“.....?”

What is she talking about? Are you telling me that I’m supposed to know them?

“Everyone, thank you for gathering here today in such numbers. Let us—”

They—No, she took off her mask, as she spoke up with a dignified voice.

“—Begin this battle.”

What appeared from behind the mask were glossy black twintails. After revealing her face, the girl slightly bowed, and proudly announced her name.

“Apologies for the late introduction, but I am the representative of today’s [Shining Star Subaru-sama] meeting, and a second-year here at Private Rouran Academy—Suzutsuki Kanade.”

♀ × ♂

“Are you shitting me!?”

.....Careless as I was, I just screamed these words at the top of my lungs, directly at Suzutsuki on stage...I mean, can you blame me? Why is she here? Not to mention as the founder and leader of [S4]? What kind of a betrayal is this? I feel like I’m dancing the polka right now with Oda Nobunaga and Caesar. The people who’ll stab us in the back are Mitsuhide, Brutus, and Suzutsuki Kanade.

“Idiot, why’d you scream like that...!” I heard Konoe’s panicked voice, but it was already too late.

“Eh? Was that...”

“That voice just now...”

I started hearing faint muttering around me, together with people suddenly leaping at me and Konoe...Ah, stop! If you do that...! Without giving me any chance to defend myself, the hood and robe were pulled off me. A moment of silence followed, gazes gathering on us, when—

“Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!”

Screams like a volcano erupting filled the gym hall. Looking next to me, I saw Subaru-sama with her face and body revealed...Oh lord, they found us out.

“Kyaaaaaa! Why is Subaru-sama here!?”

“Not to mention that he’s wearing a china dressss!?”

“Subaru-sama! Hug me! Please hug me!”

With the sudden appearance of this school’s prince, the hall suddenly changed into something resembling the live show of M* JAPAN.

However, at the same time as they were ecstatic, there were also those...

“That damn four-eyed bastard!”

“Coming here so I can kill him in person, he sure has guts!”

“Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!”

It felt like I was standing in the center of the antique Roman colosseum. Of course, nobody was cheering for me, they just wanted to see me get brutally murdered. You wouldn’t even get such feedback if you insulted popular Korean idols on the internet. In the truest sense of the word, the atmosphere changed drastically. Whereas previously calmness and silence reigned, now it was exchanged with excitement, passion—as well as madness. In the distance, I saw the [S4] members crossing the borderline to come rushing towards us.

Damn it, I messed up...I’ll be killed. I’ll lose my life before the actual event begins.

“...Calm down.” A dignified voice spoke up.

It was Suzutsuki. Just because of her order, all members present stopped moving entirely.

“Everyone, let us end our endless fight here today.” She declared, and smiled gently. “We have prepared today’s event to put a final end to our ongoing battle. That being said, possibly because my efforts were lacking as of late, the [S4] and [Watch over Committee] have been clashing more and more recently. The reason I created [S4] was simply for there to be no fighting between the fans of my dear butler.” She explained with a somewhat apologetic voice, and continued. “Ever since Subaru enrolled at this school, many fanclubs have formed, and countless bouts have resulted from this, creating a Warring Fanclubs era. For my butler’s sake, you all were fighting. I wanted to stop these needless fighting by establishing [S4]. So please, don’t make my wish end up in vain.”

Konoe listened to Suzutsuki’s words, and muttered a quiet ‘Young

lady...' in response. Judging from that, it seems like Konoe didn't know about her being [S4]'s leader. I bet she probably tried to be considerate, and thus hid it from her. I mean, what she's saying does make sense. She openly admitted that she deeply loved her own butler after all.

That's why she formed her own fanclub, so that no more needless fighting would occur—No, we're talking about that rich lady. She must have created [S4] in order to control all of the students, and not cause us any trouble. However...

"That's why, everyone, let the winner of this event decide everything." She declared with a gentle expression. "That is our goal for today. Depending on the result, I don't mind whatever happens to the present Sakamachi-kun." She looked over towards me.

That Devil Suzutsuki...As expected, she has no plans to actually help me out here. She probably enjoys seeing me cornered. Telling me to find my way out of this myself...

"Hah."

Fight's on, wench. I'll make it out of here alive. Don't think everything will always work out for you.

"...Subaru. What will you do? Are you really fine being on that side?" Suzutsuki asked with a speaker in hand.

After thinking about it for a moment, Konoe answered with a resolute 'Yes'.

"I am your butler, young lady. However, the reason this fight happened is because of me. Then, I will choose that method that will keep people unhurt. No, let me choose that." She announced with a determined tone.

Hearing this, Suzutsuki nodded along.

"Then, let us begin this great war with Subaru and Sakamachi-kun on the line—I name it the [First Subaru-sama Cult Quiz Contest]."

Together with this declaration, the entire gym hall screamed and

cheered like never before.

“Cult quiz contest?”

As everybody else screamed in excitement, Nakuru’s confused voice still clearly reached my ears.

“Yes, that is the identity of today’s competition. You will answer questions regarding Subaru, and the one who scores more points will bring the win to their squad.”

“...So that’s what these buttons were for.”

Just like I guessed, they planned this as some messed up TV show, and whoever presses first has the right to answer.

“However, this situation is not very convenient.”

“Why? We have Konoe on our side.”

Since these questions will be about Konoe herself, she should be able to answer them easily, right?

“Yes. However, that only brings us to equal grounds. After all, we had a regular Subaru-sama fanclub meeting, called the ‘Subaru-sama Cult Exam’.”

“.....”

What kind of exam is that? Do you get a Subaru-sama Rank or something?

“Judging from the results of this exam, Nakuru’s group ended up losing. That’s why, we’re only on equal ground now with Subaru-sama at our side.” Nakuru explained, and added. “By the way, Usami-senpai ranked very high when it came to that exam.”

I see. So basically, at this stage, both teams could fall.

“Hmpf, no problem at all. This quiz is about me, right? There’s no way I wouldn’t be able to answer those questions.” Konoe spoke, brimming with confidence.

Not to mention that I'm in there as well. I've been with Konoe ever since this April, and spend more time with her than the average student. If so, then we can win...

"Then, let us begin the quiz." Suzutsuki announced over the speaker.

Alright, the first question should be easy...

"Question 1: What bread did Subaru buy at the school store on the Tuesday two weeks ago."

"Like hell I know that?!" I screamed in rage.

What kind of cult is this!? Even Konoe faltered, frantically trying to remember as she bit her lip. Of course, I don't even remember what I ate two days ago...

"Yes! A hot dog bun, a chocolate cone, melon bread, and an egg sandwich!" Nakuru pressed the button at lightning speed, and answered.

"Correct." Suzutsuki answered, and...Wait, she was right!?

"Eh? Why are you so shocked? Well, it is surprising to see Subaru-sama eat so much with such a small body, but..."

"No no no no! That's not why I'm shocked!"

"Then, why? That was an easy question just now."

"Easy!?"

"Yes. Every fanclub member could answer that question." Nakuru answered like it was nothing.

The people around us also commented with things like 'Ahh, I was so nervous, I was too late' or 'Thank god it was an easy question in the beginning, right'...Yeah, no. These guys are nuts. They are bat-shit crazy. You're no fans anymore, you're stalkers.

"Next question." Suzutsuki continued without much hesitation.

Damn it, I bet there's going to be a question even I can answer...!

“Question 2: The juice that Subaru drank yesterday in the classroom...”

Ohhh! That's much easier! After all, we're classmates. I feel like it was some afternoon tea...

“...what is the profile of the company worker who is supplying and filling the vending machines at this school?”

“That ain't even got anything to do with Subaru god dang it!” I screamed in rage once again.

However, this time the buzzer of the [S4] party rang out, and someone screamed.

“Yes! That's Carlos Uehara! He is a Brazilian man who left his family back in his country to earn money here!”

And look at that, it was correct again. Seriously!? Why do you know about that?! Is Carlos' information public or something?! As I was left baffled, the girl who answered the question correctly showed a confident grin.

“Alright, it's time to take back Subaru-sama!”

“I bet he must have been threatened by that four-eyes!”

“Steal him back! Return our god!”

They are intent on nailing me to the cross like I was Jesus. It seems like those girls from the [S4] are under the false impression that Konoe is being deceived by me or something like that. I guess I really have to win this battle. Otherwise, my head will fly...!

“Urk...!”

However, Suzutsuki's questions were no joke. They reached from a teacher's dark past, like ‘How much money did Subaru's English teacher pay for their teacher's license?’ to social construct questions like ‘Subaru is thinking that this country's financial situation is going

down the drain. What are possible methods to restructure the economy?’ that made no sense in this context. All of these questions sounded way too ridiculous, but Konoe’s fans answered each and every one of them correctly.

I was looking down on you too much, Subaru-sama Fanclub. To think you were such a twisted organization...

“D-Damn it...Even though this is about me, I can’t even answer one question...” Konoe started tearing up, and grit her teeth in frustration.

Yeah, calm down, Konoe. Seeing you this frustrated is actually pretty cute, but half of this isn’t even about you anymore.

“Don’t worry, we’ve been answering questions at a good pace. Nakuru and the others are working hard, so we should be about equal right now. Since there’s a quality prize on the line, everyone is motivated like never before.” Nakuru showed us a comforting expression, after having answered several questions herself.

It seems like the people answering the questions aren’t being shown just how many points each team has, or how many points a solved question gets. They will probably reveal it all at the very end. Feels like Red and W*ite singing contest on the NHK.

“50:50...so we both have chances to win.”

Thinking like that, I’ve managed to calm down a bit. Really, I wonder what kind of punishment will await me. I heard that it’s something like ‘People who laid their hands on Subaru-sama will be burned at stake like during the witch trials’, huh. I thought it was just some dark joke, but I guess not.

“Everyone, great work making it this far. It is time for the final question.”

“!”

With Suzutsuki’s voice, I returned back to my senses. The final question, which will decide this contest. Alright, we definitely have to take this one home...! I gulped audibly, and it seemed like the

others felt similar, as the atmosphere tightened up. In the midst of this, Suzutsuki slowly opened her mouth.

“Question 99—Who was Subaru’s partner for his first kiss?”

At that moment, the entire place froze up. Her first kiss? Also, even the [S4] and [Watch over Committee] have grown silent. Of course... everybody except Konoe Subaru.

“Y-Young lady!?” Butler-kun jolted up from her chair with a beet red face, panicking.

She clearly didn’t expect that question to pop up now. But...that reaction. Does she know the answer?

“...Alright, go and answer it, Konoe!” I said with a tone full of determination, to which Konoe’s gaze shot towards me, shocked.

“What are you saying, Jirou! Are you serious!? Do you even know what would happen if I revealed that here!?”

Hmm, now that she says it. After all, the person who stole Subaru-sama’s first will die for sure. That lucky girl will be hated by every single person present—No, possibly by the entire school, cursed and experience any kind of torture you could imagine. But, that doesn’t matter. If we lose here, it’ll be me who’s burning at the stake. It pains me to say it, but that unlucky fellow...no, lucky bastard will have to be sacrificed here...!

“Please, Konoe. It’s a one-time request of mine.”

“Urk...” Konoe blushed furiously, and started tearing up.

I bet she must be embarrassed to broadly name the person who stole her first kiss, especially in such a situation. As a result, Subaru-sama grew silent, whereas everybody else just waited for her answer. I don’t even know how much time passed, when finally—Konoe opened her small, flower petal-like lips.

“.....Jirou.”

Following that, she used her cute index finger to point in my

direction.

“.....”

.....Now hold on. No no no no no, what is she talking about? I tried to open my mouth and protest about this nonsense I was just forced to hear, when—

“Correct. By the way, it happened this year in April at the newly-opened leisure land.”

Before I could say anything, Suzutsuki got the jump on me, and practically made this entire situation explode into a chaotic mess....Huh? Ahaha, how troublesome. I don't get what's going on right now.



“That being said, it seemed to have been an accident. Sakamachi-kun was about to drown, so Subaru resorted to mouth-to-mouth respiration.” Not knowing of my internal conflict, Suzutsuki continued with a blank tone.

I mean, I was about to drown, but...didn't she save me...

“Y-You're kidding, right? Konoe, Suzutsuki is just talking nonsense

again, yeah?” I clung onto my last glimmer of hope, and asked Konoe.

However, she just quietly shook her head.

“...No. What the young lady is saying is all true.” Konoe said, her voice about to cut out from the embarrassment.

—A moment later.

“W-What did you saaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!?”

The entire hall screamed what I was feeling inside of me. Immediately after Konoe finished those words, I heard screams and shrieks around me.

“W-What is this about!?”

“Please, more details!”

“Did Subaru-sama’s lips taste like blue hawaii!”

The folks from the [Watch over Committee] immediately surrounded me. Urk, they’re so excited, they completely lost themselves...! They’re like a pack of wolves. Even Nakuru was going crazy, screaming ‘W-W-W-With your glasses!? Were you kissing while you were wearing glasses!?’ right into my ear.

In the midst of these I heard heavy footsteps approaching me. When I turned towards them, I saw everyone from [S4] approaching. They look like they couldn’t care less about this contest anymore. Instead, their eyes were gleaming with intent to kill me, as they crossed the borderline with no hesitation.

—I’m dead. At this rate, I’ll be slaughtered. The second I judged so, I started running.

“Ah, he’s running!”

“After him! Don’t let him escape!”

“SLAUGHTER HIM SLAUGHTER HIM!”

I heard blood-curdling screams behind my back. Eeeek, this makes me feel like I'm in Spain during the Bull Runs. It is said that in times of imminent lethal danger, the human body can muster up strength beyond what is normally possible. That is exactly what I felt at that moment. Both my legs carried me through the gym hall with speeds I didn't expect from myself. My single goal in mind was the mastermind behind this situation.

"Oh my, Jirou-kun. What's wrong? You're quite energetic today, I see."

While gasping for air, I jumped up the stage, to which Suzutsuki greeted me with these words, naturally with the microphone away from her. Damn, she really is enjoying this, huh! She thrives off my suffering!

"Hey, do something about this, Suzutsuki!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Don't make me spell it out! At this rate, I'll be killed by these fanatics!"

"Fufu. Why? Because of that question just now, the [Watch over Committee] won with 87 to 62 points, you know?"

"Can't you see that literally nobody cares about the contest anymore!?"

"It's fine, I'll properly cut out any decisive scenes."

"You can!?"

"Well, the one being cut out will probably be Jirou-kun. Right out of this existence, that is."

"Am I some TV blooper?!"

"And then, the staff enjoyed the delicious Jirou-kun slices backstage."

"It's not funny if that could actually happen, okay!"

Even as we were talking, the members of the [Watch over Committee] and the [S4] were ready to leap up on stage, planning to assault me. What insane pressure this is. Not even housewives preparing for a sale were this hungry for flesh.

“...I’m sorry, I didn’t want to do this either.” Suddenly, Suzutsuki apologized with a dejected voice.

Eh? What’s this reaction? Did even that villainess feel something like guilt now?

“But, you know, when I get too happy, I tend to just do it.”

“What kind of logic is that!?”

“I figured that if I revealed the fact about the kiss here, it’d definitely end up interesting.”

“For you, yeah!”

“When I saw you and Subaru come here, I immediately thought ‘Ahh, I can definitely make this interesting’, and got all excited.”

“Nothing interesting happened! You made it happen!”

“Fufu, you’re right.” Suzutsuki showed an enjoyable smile. “You know...I’m the type of person who loves to tease the person I—” She explained, sounding faintly embarrassed.

What’s that about? I couldn’t pick up her words towards the end because she suddenly started whispering.

“...Damn it.”

...I can’t anymore. This is all that damn wench’s fault. Shit, how can she be the idol of this school? She might have the looks, but look at what she’s hiding beneath that. I hear she often gets confessed to, but if they all knew about her real personality...

“—!”

There, it felt like a shock ran through my body. If this was a manga,

then you'd see a lightbulb pop up above my head. Being chased around all the time might have led me to become crazy. I came up with a solution, a method to break out of this rotten situation.

“...!”

However, that would require a lot of determination. After all, this will be the first time for me, and although this is simply to protect my own life, I will have to lie to Suzutsuki—No, to every person currently present. If I'm going to do it, then I need to go all the way.

“—Suzutsuki, lend me your mic.” I asked Suzutsuki.

“?” She tilted her head in confusion, but listened to my request.

Alright, the rest just relies on my guts. Standing in front of me were the countless fanclub members, ready to leap at me. With as loud of a voice as I could manage, I screamed.

“Everyone, listen to me!”

My voice resounded from the speakers. Wow, I really feel like singing now. If I screamed ‘Listen to my voice!’, they might actually just jump up here. However, probably shocked by my desperate attempt, the pack stopped moving. This is my chance. Can't let this escape...!

“Let me say one thing! This entire event happened because you all think that me and Konoe are dating, right!? But, that's actually not it! Konoe and I are definitely not a couple!”

My voice must have reached them, as several people in the audience looked at me in confusion, bewilderment filling their rows. This slowly changed into confirmation, and nobody dared to move closer to the stage. Instead, they were all just waiting for my next words, so I tightly grasped the microphone.

“That's right, Konoe and I aren't dating. We're simple friends. The person I really like...” I took a deep breath, and formed the words in my head as smoothly as possible. “The one I truly like...is this very Suzutsuki Kanadeeeeeee!”

Because of this unexpected event, the pack started to grow noisy.

“Eh? That just now, was that...”

“D-Don’t tell me...a confession?”

“Kyaaaa! In front of so many people...!”

Shrieks of excitement and voices of disbelief villed the gym hall. Alright, just as I planned. You’re right, this is a confession. My one and only way of making it out of this situation alive. As you know, Suzutsuki is popular. She even got a love letter before, and she rejected as many guys as there are stars in the sky, and every single boy at our school admires her.

That’s why, confessing to her wouldn’t be anything weird at all. I’m your average guy who got closer to Konoe with the goal of approaching Suzutsuki in the process. Conveniently enough, the rumour about me dating Usami hasn’t gone around at all. It’s all just nonsense so that I can make it out of this place.

At the very least, their consciousness of me dating Konoe should be gone. It’ll probably cause a big ruckus that I was her first kiss, but worrying about that comes later. After all, from here on out, I will be rejected by Suzutsuki. I knew this from the start. There’s no way Suzutsuki Kanade would have feelings for me. Then, nothing out of the ordinary should happen even if I confessed. Confessing to her here, I will just get rejected. With that impact, I’ll make them all forget! All I need is for Suzutsuki to reject me...

“.....” Oddly enough, Suzutsuki seemed a bit frozen stiff in shock.

However, she apparently figured out something right after, as she stole the mic back from me.

“Thank you, Sakamachi-kun.” She gently smiled.

Hm? Weird, that’s not the reaction I expected. I seriously think I’m wrong, but...she’s not going to say yes, is she...?

“But, I’m sorry.” However, she immediately went back on her own word. “If you confess to me like this, in such a place, then I can’t go

out with you.”

“!”

T-This woman, she must have figured out what I was planning. Well, normally I'd be annoyed by that, but today I feel nothing but gratitude. As long as she just rejects my confession...

“Not to mention.” Suzutsuki continued in a sharp voice, like she was going to betray my expectations. “I do think you are a good person. But, I'm sure that this is just in the sense of a classmate, and nothing more. Put frankly, you stop at being a good person.”

“!?” It felt like I was forced to hear words a man should never have to hear.

...Um, Suzutsuki-san? It's fine, okay. You already rejected me, so insulting me like this won't benefit any of us.

“Ah, I'm sorry. You are such a good person, so why do I have to reject you...Even though you are such a kind person.”

Stab.

“It's a shame. As a friend, you are wonderful. But, going beyond that, and becoming my lover is...you know?”

Stab, stab.

“That's why, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. But, Sakamachi-kun, let me say this at the very end. You can't always stay as a good person. If you're troubled, then come seek me out, I'll always support you. After all, you're a good person.” Suzutsuki said, and showed me a gentle smile.

.....Weird. Why do I feel so sad now? I don't know why, but before I realized it, I sank down on the ground. A good person...For some reason, these words stabbed right into my chest.

“Um...if you'd like, then buy something to eat later.”

I don't know if it was [S4] or [Watch over Committee], but some

member in the crowd gave me a 500 yen coin. As if that was the trigger, other people around approached me, saying things like ‘You did great out there, champ’, or ‘Keep on living, that’s all we can do’ or ‘Sorry, it was my misunderstanding, so don’t cry’, and so on.

Together with these uplifting comments, I would receive small amounts of donations, gum, chocolate, even Lipovi*an D...and other nice gestures. Even the people who were dead set on slaughtering me now were giving me a pitiful glance...Yeah, just as planned, haha. I was saved, that’s all that matters, so why can’t I stop crying...

“Senpai!”

A familiar voice reached my ears. Looking over, I saw Nakuru.

“You can’t lose! Let’s use this failed love and make you awake to a different interest! Nakuru and the [Watch over Committee] will try to work towards **that** direction as well!”

“.....”

What do you even mean by that? Are you happy that you found new material or something? All because I got rejected by a girl? Ahh, I don’t care. I don’t even have the strength to retort on anything. Either way, with this, the decisive event between the [S4] and [Watch over Committee]—the [First Subaru-sama Cult Quiz Contest] ended with the reconciliation of both groups.

As I hung my head as probably the only loser of the night, the leaders of the two groups, Suzutsuki and Nakuru, were discussing things. Saying that they should work hard in a different direction from now on. So basically, everything was resolved because I was downgraded from Subaru-sama’s lover to being a normal classmate. What a peaceful result, indeed.

...Yeah, with such a single sacrifice, which would be me, a crisis was averted, and peace restored. If I just think of it that way, it doesn’t hurt as bad. After most of the fanclub members left the hall, only Suzutsuki and I were left behind on the stage. Since Konoe wasn’t around, she must be outside giving autographs or something.

“What’s wrong, Jirou-kun? Why so sad? Wasn’t this exactly what you had planned out?” Suzutsuki called out to me with a calm voice as always.

Well, you’re not wrong, but...

“If so, then I think you need to be thankful. I did something so cruel in order to make you gain more sympathy.”

Eat shit and die, you demon! I screamed inside of my heart.

“Hmpf, don’t give me such a scary look. Isn’t it fine? Your life was saved.”

“That is true, but still...” I tried to put strength into my limbs, and stood up.

I can’t be depressed forever. For now, I’ll just forget all the nonsense this girl told me. Though I’ll probably have nightmares about it for a while.

“But...Jirou-kun.” Suzutsuki asked me. “That confession just now... what if I agreed?”

“Huh?”

“If I said yes to your confession, what would you have done?”

“.....”

Umm...even if you suddenly ask me that.

“Then I would have just said ‘Sorry, that was a lie’, and apologized. But, I knew that wouldn’t happen. After all, there’s no way you’d agree to my confession.”

“.....” Suzutsuki let out a faint sigh.

...Hm? Is it just me, or does she look like she’s in a bad mood?

“Hey, Jirou-kun.” Suddenly, Suzutsuki called out my name, like a kitten asking to be fed. “You know, I am actually pretty angry.”

“Eh?”

“I mean, you did it to protect yourself, but you lied to me in front of so many people. As a boy, you’re one of the worst. I feel truly hurt.”

“Well, that’s...”

I know that I can’t make this an excuse, but still...Did I really hurt her that badly? I didn’t think it would hurt her that badly to be honest...

“That’s why—I will get my revenge now.”

“Excuse me?”

Because of this sudden declaration of war, I was left bewildered, merely waiting for her next words.

“Revenge, as I said. You will be going through the same as I just had to.”

It happened in an instant.

“—!?”

With a bright smile, Suzutsuki suddenly embraced me from the front. And if that wasn’t enough, she spoke with a voice as sweet as hot chocolate—

“—I love you~”

“...!”

Right then, I felt a hot sensation inside my nose.



My nose started bleeding. Without a doubt, this was my gynophobia acting up.

“...Guha!?” A voice escaped my mouth.

It didn't matter that she was wearing clothes. Even though they were there, I felt Suzutsuki's softness on my body. On top of that, her sweet words just now. It's a miracle I managed to stay conscious.

“You....you...!”

Not to mention that Suzutsuki pressed her...two soft and voluptuous certain-kill weapons directly on me! Ahhh, it's different from Konoe...even Usami! How do I say this...they're no joke! Suzutsuki... No, Deretsuki-san is deadly!

“Alright, we're even now.” She said with a teasing tone, and moved away from me.

“.....”

...Alright, I decided. I definitely can't make her angry anymore. Damn Devil Suzutsuki, she's going to kill me just because I faked a confession like that. Also, her words just now...that's just not fair. Being so cute isn't fair.

“Now, let's go, shall we. The after-festival is about to begin. Since you're finally free, wouldn't it be best to enjoy the festival?” Suzutsuki said it like it was nothing special at all.

She really is as much of a calm beauty as always. How can you flip that switch so quickly?

“You're not wrong. But, there is one thing I was curious about. What would you have done if Subaru and I didn't participate in the end?” I asked, while wiping away the blood with a tissue.

The fact that we came here should have been a mere coincidence. If not for Usami, I wouldn't have known about this...

“Ahh, no worries about that.” Suzutsuki calmly responded. “After all, today's event was a fixed game.”

“...What?”

“It was all decided. Loser, winner, participants, everything. A certain girl from the [S4], who is exceptionally good at the quizzes, quit.”

“A girl who is good at the quizzes?”

“Indeed. I received a direct message, saying that she wanted to quit.

Saying that ‘I never had any interest in this event in the first place’. She might be a bit problematic, but possessed a lot of battle strength, which is why our loss was decided the second she left. Then again, I didn’t tell the other members.”

“...Suzutsuki, what’s that girl’s name?”

I just suddenly felt the urge to ask that. No, I was forced to ask that by my instincts.

“...? What are you talking about? You should know her more than anybody else, right?” Suzutsuki seemed slightly confused, and continued. “—It’s Usami. The girl who quit was Usami Masamune. Isn’t she your girlfriend?”

Chapter 5: Liar Liar

“H-Hold on, Jirou-kun, where are you going?”

I ignored Suzutsuki’s question, and started running...What is going on? While jumping off the stage, I complained inside of my head. Usami quit the [S4] before the event? Not to mention that she apparently had no interest in the event in the first place? If so...then why did she go so far as to deceive me and make me her temporary lover? She said she was lying, that she was making up stuff. But...

“.....!”

If this wasn’t any punishment for me, then...If the fact of her being so passionate towards the [S4]’s win...was just a lie, and she still continued to deceive me, then...she must have acted as my girlfriend for an entirely different reason...?

“...No good.”

I tried calling her with my phone, but I couldn’t get through to her. That stupid rabbit, she must have turned it off. I can’t properly explain it, but it felt like something bad was about to happen. It felt like if I didn’t rush to her place right now, something irreversible would happen.

I ran out of the gym hall. The sun had already started to set, the surroundings growing dark. If I don’t hurry, I might have trouble finding her all-together. But...where is she? Where could she be? She quit [S4] and didn’t participate in the event. If so, then she probably hasn’t been around since we split up at Kureha’s class. Damn it, I need to find her right now...

“...Jirou.”

An alto voice called out to me right as I left the gym hall. When I turned towards the voice, there was only one person...

“Konoe?”

That's right, this is Konoe Subaru. She stood in front of the gym hall, her face cast down. Oh yeah, where was she even until now? I haven't seen her since the event ended. I thought she'd be waiting outside for us.

“.....”

No, this might be perfect. If Usami is still around here on the school grounds, it's much more efficient if the both of us looked for her. I should probably explain the situation to Konoe and—

“!?”

Right as I thought that, an impact hit me directly on the cheek, followed by intense pain. To my shock, Konoe had used the palm of her hand to directly slap me on the face.

“I...I had no idea!” The girl's voice was filled with rage and anger, as she continued. “So you...actually had feelings for the young lady...!”

“!”

I messed up. I forgot to explain that incident just now to Konoe. I just confessed to her master, so I can't blame her for being shocked, and it must have gone to her head.

“Listen, Konoe! I had no other choice but to—”

“Shut up! I don't want to hear any more of your stupid excuses!” Faint tears build up in the corner of her eyes, as she denies my words. “...Jirou. I don't understand you. What is going on? First you suddenly get a girlfriend, and now you confess to the young lady... Were you...were you just deceiving me this entire time?”

“!”

Hearing these words, I couldn't say anything else, and just swallowed my breath. However, my shock turned into regret immediately after. Seeing me stay silent, Konoe's expression changed. Reflected in my eyes were her own, filled with complicated feelings.

“...I see...So that's what that was.” She muttered with an awfully

quivering voice. “You must have really hated the idea of walking around the festival with me, huh? That’s why you continued to deceive me. This entire time, even right now...!”

“...No! I did this for you, I couldn’t come up with any other way...!”

That’s right, this was for Konoe. It was all just to protect her secret...!

“.....”

...No, that’s not all. If that was the only problem, I could have explained the circumstances to her in that classroom after Usami left. But, I didn’t do that. Why? That’s obvious. I didn’t want to be questioned by Konoe about my lie. Even if it was for her sake, the fact that I deceived her, and broke our precious promise, doesn’t change. We promised that we’d walk around the festival together, and she was looking forward to it so much, and yet I broke that promise.

If I had just explained the circumstances to her, she surely would have understood. But, I couldn’t. Instead, I was too scared, and ran away. It’s all because I’m weak. As a result of that...

“...I hate you.” A freezing cold alto voice rang out.

Konoe looked at me with her translucent eyes, and declared.

“We’re not friends anymore...!” She screamed with a shaking voice, turned her back towards me, and started running.

“Urk...Konoe!”

Chase after her. That thought filled my head. And yet.

“...Shit!”

My legs wouldn’t move how I told them to. If I chased after Konoe now, what would happen to Usami? I need to hurry and chase after her. But, maybe I’m just worrying for nothing? Right now, I should focus on Konoe instead. Even though my thoughts were clear, my body hesitated. Why can’t I decide between either of them, and just stand here doing nothing!

“Jirou-kun!” A dignified voice called out to me behind my back.

Turning around, standing there was Suzutsuki. She must have chased after me. With a calm voice, she spoke up.

“Subaru was just with you, right? Did something happen?”

“Well...”

Suzutsuki looked straight at me, as I grew silent. She must have seen that something was off, after seeing Konoe run off like that.

“Tell me, Jirou-kun. I don’t know about everything, so explain to me what’s going on right now.”

“.....”

Like I was guided by her relaxing voice, I explained everything. About Usami and our contract, about the lie she told me, and that I desperately had to go see her right now. Of course, about Konoe Subaru as well.

“...I understand.” Hearing everything, Suzutsuki answered with a calm voice. “Jirou-kun, you go search for Usami-san.”

“...! But...”

“Don’t worry about Subaru. I bet you won’t be able to reach her, but she might answer my phone calls, and even if she doesn’t, I should be able to figure out where she’s gone off to. However...”

Only you can save Usami-san right now—she said, awfully serious.

“It’s fine, I’ll tell Subaru about everything. If she understands that you had no other choice, she’ll forgive you. You’ll be able to make up...and go back to being friends.” She spoke with a reassuring voice, smiling ever so gently.

...Maybe she’s willing to help me out easily because of what happened back in April. She also wanted to go back to being friends with Konoe, but couldn’t do so. In her head, I must have looked like her, which is why...

“...Sorry, Suzutsuki.” I gave her these final words, and started running.

I’ll leave Konoe to her. I personally should do whatever I can to search for Usami.

“...No.”

I’m not searching for her, I’m going to meet her. I feel like that nasty rabbit will be standing there, colored by the setting sun. I ran along the asphalt, rushing towards the 2nd school building of Rouran Academy. It’s one of her favorite places here, and the location we shared our promise.

♀ × ♂

“...Color me surprised. To think you knew I was here.”

Up on the second school building’s rooftop, when I opened the door, I was greeted by the dark sky, and the silver March moon in the sky. Standing beneath this light was Usami Masamune—**Standing beyond the safety fence.**

“Good for you. Since you’re here, the [Watch over Committee] won, right? Well, I knew they’d take it from the very beginning.” Usami turned her body towards me, looking at me through the fence.

I knew it. She never was interested in the victory of the [S4]. On the contrary, she helped the [Watch over Committee] win by not participating.

“...Explain yourself.” I was gasping for air because I just ran up the stairs. “Why did you save me?”

That’s right, Usami made the [S4] lose on purpose so that I wouldn’t be in any danger. Despite always saying how much she hated me.

“...Well, it’s my way to pay the price for the trouble I caused you.”

“What?”

“See, because of me, you had to break your promise with Subaru-

sama, right? This is my thanks for playing my boyfriend all that time. But...that's over now." She muttered, and took out her smartphone... which had Konoe as her background image.

Without any hesitation, she threw the phone on the ground. We're up on the 4th floor here, so even if she went to pick it up later, it would be broken beyond use. And, this would be the case for something else besides her phone...

"Hey, stupid chicken. Can I ask one last thing?"

"What is it? I don't mind answering a question as long as I can." While responding, I carefully moved closer towards usami.

There's about ten meters between us. I need to reach her quickly, before it's too late.

"...Thanks. Then...are you an esper? Do you have some supernatural power or anything like that?"

"Hell no I don't. Also, there's a lot of different powers, you know."

"Right...Then, can you read my mind? Can you use telepathy?"

"Don't joke with me, I'm not some space man." I threw in a retort, and slowly got closer to Usami, while being careful as to not aggravate her.

"Ahahaha, you're right. There's no way you could use that, and superpowers like that don't even exist. Nobody would have something so convenient."

"...What do you want to say?" When I returned this question, Usami let out a saddened laugh.

Only a few more meters between us. Right now, the phone in my pocket vibrated, but I don't have any time for that.

"I just thought that everyone is pretty amazing."

"Huh?"

"I mean, nobody can use telepathy or read what the other person is thinking, and yet they can get along with each other. They can put trust in each other. They're doing it all so naturally, and yet...It's impossible for me." She confessed. "I was born as a defective product. When I gained consciousness, I was...how do I say it...unable to trust others? Yeah, something like that. I didn't trust other people...No, I couldn't."

"...What's up with that."

I never even thought about that. I mean, you can just try to get along? Even without telepathy, you'll eventually build a relationship that works on trust.

"I bet you don't get it. From my point of view, your idea of simply getting along with others, it just doesn't make any sense."

"...You're a mess, huh." I muttered.

"And you don't hold back. I mean, I tried, you know? I was part of a club in middle school, and I did here as well. Well, the club I joined is a bit different from what you'd expect."

"....."

"But, it was the same no matter where I went. Getting along with people, trusting other people—I can't. I'm always doubtful and careful in the case that they might be lying to me, and that's how I can live my life. That's why I'm always alone."

"...What about your family? If strangers aren't good enough, can't you just spend time with your family?"

I mean, at least you should be able to have trust in your family. Even if they beat me up all the time, Mom and Kureha still would be there for me.

"Nah, my parents were on bad terms. Ever since I could think, they would always fight, and even talk badly about me."

"....."

“Neither do I have any siblings I could put my trust into. In order to get away from that toxic family, I started living alone. I told you right, I had confidence in my cooking.”

“Well, I bet you’d get good at cooking if you always cook for yourself. But, what did your parents say about that?”

“Nothing really. Just do what you want, like.”

“Just do what you want...”

“Going with the principle of laissez-faire, right. Both my parents are important people at their work, so in order to preserve their position and relationships, they decided against getting divorced. When I left, they were both like ‘Just have to send you the bare minimum amount of money right?’, almost as if they didn’t even care about me.” Usami showed a cynical smile.

Unable to put trust into others. She said it happened at birth, but I bet it was a strong influence because of her parents. Normally, they are the number one existence that would always support you...but that didn’t happen. The fact of that left a wound deeper than what I could probably imagine.

“But...something happened at this school that caused a change.”

“A change?”

“Yep. Coming here, for the first time ever, I fell in love—with Subaru-sama.”

“...”

“It was love at first sight. After all Subaru-sama was like a solo prince who never approached people on his own. That’s why I thought... maybe he’s the same as me.”

“.....!”

Now that she mentioned it, Konoe was like that a year ago. She was scared of other people finding out that she’s a girl, and decided to not make any friends. Because of her fear of knives, she couldn’t even get

along with her master. That year, Konoe was always alone.

“That’s why...I thought maybe Subaru-sama would understand how I feel. I hoped that maybe...he would become my friend.”

“.....”

...I see. She was the same as Konoe back in April. That’s why she desperately wanted friends...

“After that, I wanted to know more about Subaru-sama, and joined a fanclub with many other strangers. Even if I couldn’t get along with Subaru-sama, and be next to him, I thought I would be able to do it eventually since I was only in my first year. But then...”

Once we became second-years, Subaru-sama suddenly got himself a friend—Usami explained her frustration. Ahh, I see. And that friend was none other than...

“That’s right. You, stupid chicken, became Subaru-sama’s friend. At first, I thought it was impossible. But, seeing you get along with him, talk with him, even eating lunch together, I could only accept the fact that Subaru-sama got himself a friend.

A friend...This April, Konoe and I became friends. I found out about her secret, and managed to become her friend. Because of that, Konoe wasn’t alone anymore.

“Ever since he met you, Subaru-sama changed. He started smiling more, and it felt like he got along better with his master Suzutsuki Kanade. All of that was because of you. Say...do I really have to spill it out?”

“...What exactly?”

“You really don’t get it. The reason I approached you and threatened you to become my fake lover is so easy. I even used the [S4] to make it more believable.”

“...Wait, don’t tell me...”

If Usami thinks that I could change Konoe...if she believed that I had

some special power that changed Subaru-sama from a loner into someone who had friends...

“Correct. That’s the reason I approached you. If it’s you...the person who changed Subaru-sama...then maybe you might be able to change me as well. That’s what I thought. I got my hopes up, and put faith in you with no reason at all.”

“...!”

You stupid rabbit. Are you kidding me? Didn’t you yourself say that I’m an average person with no special part about me?

“In the end, nothing changed. You’re a normal guy, and couldn’t change me. But, because of that date today, seeing how you get along with Subaru-sama, I realized. I bet Subaru-sama changed all because of himself.”

But, I can’t ever do that—Usami said, and faintly smiled.

“.....”

‘I don’t want to admit it, but you and Subaru-sama are friends. I’m just getting in the way’, that’s what she said in the cafe. And following that...

“I told you before, right? I’m exhausted. I went as far as to deceive you, and in the end I only realized that I’m a helpless existence. Feeling so tired of everything, I came all the way here.”

“.....”

Finally, I made it to the fence. Only a meter was between the two of us.

“Alright, that’s all I wanted to say. Ah, one last thing. I really hate you after all. You’re not even special, and I hate you for that. Also, I hate Subaru-sama as well. I hate the Subaru-sama who managed to change himself all on his own. More than anything...I hate myself the most.”

“...!”

Panicking because of her words, I closed the small distance between us in an instant, and I reached for her with my hand. However, that had the opposite effect. As a result, the girl's twintails fluttered beneath the shining moon. My action must have surprised the girl, as she subconsciously stepped backwards—

♀ × ♂

“Y...You...How about you go on a diet...!”

I had frantically pushed my arms through the openings between the fence, and grabbed Usami's wrist as I threw a complaint at her. Way below us on the ground, the large campfire burned. I guess the after-festival must have started. Maybe they're at the folks dance right now? Damn it, and I'm here working my ass off.

“...Urk!?”

So heavy...Right now, I'm barely holding onto the girl's one hand. Not to mention that she didn't even try to put any strength into her arm, like she was just a doll hanging down the building.

“...!”

I somehow managed to hold onto her, but there actually is another problem. I could feel goosebumps all over my body, and heat gathering in my nose. I really don't want to admit it, but my gynophobia is going to activate. Unbelievable that it won't even leave me alone in a situation like this...!

“...What are you doing? Just let go and take it easy. Should I try to shake you off instead?”

Our eyes met through the fence, and she gave me a cold warning like that. That damn nasty rabbit, she's even a twisted mess at a situation like this.

“Ugh...!?”

Shit, I can't stop my gynophobia from activating. I can't save her on my own, so I need to convince her no matter what it takes...!

“Hey, you nasty rabbit.” I put strength into my fingers, and spoke up. “Since you just told me of your secret, let me fill you in on a secret of mine. The thing is...I have gynophobia.”

“...What?” As expected, Usami couldn’t believe her ears.

“No, seriously. Because of my family’s circumstances, I can’t handle touching or being touched by other girls. Put simply, if I touch a girl, my nose starts bleeding, and in the first case scenario, I blank out.”

“.....”

Silence. After a few seconds, Usami spoke up.

“Pffft, ahahaha! What kind of embarrassing chicken disposition is that! Ahh, I see! That’s why you’re into guys!”

“.....”

Damn, she really is not nervous at all, despite this entire situation.

“Shut up. It’s actually a lot of trouble for me, you know. Even now, just holding your hand is pure hell for me. That’s why...just grab my hand, and I’ll pull you up.” I tried my best to stay calm and steady my breathing.

Once again, silence followed.

“...Sorry, stupid chicken.” Usami only gave me these words. “...It’s okay now. I’m tired. I don’t want to live my life unable to make any friends, never needed by anybody...I’d rather die right here.”

“...!”

It’s no use. This exhaustion and resignation in her words, she definitely won’t listen to me.

“...You idiot!”

However, giving up is not an option either. I don’t care about some stupid reason. Maybe I was just influenced by our fake dating, the adorable face she had from time to time, or the sad and lonely

expression she had in the animal cafe...I don't know. All I know is... just as Suzutsuki said...I'm probably the only person who can save her right now...!

“Urk...!”

I desperately tried to pull her up, but with my body going numb from the gynophobia, it wouldn't work out that easily. If anything, I was slowly starting to lose control. The red liquid came pouring out of my nose, my field of view grey hazy. Slowly, all strength escaped from my fingers.

“Y-You damn rabbit...!” I howled, desperately holding on to my consciousness.

But, this was my limit. I couldn't even muster up enough energy to speak.

“_____”

Damn it...I'm so pathetic. So weak, I can't even save a single girl. Feeling regret and anger fill my body, I bit my lip to somehow keep my consciousness connected—And that's when it happened. Suddenly, I heard an electronic **Bzzzt** sound from the nearby speaker. It was the signal of a school broadcast. Surprisingly enough, a familiar voice came from the speaker.

‘.....Jirou, can you hear my voice?’

It was a familiar alto voice, which pulled my consciousness up from the abyss. After all, I knew this voice. It belonged to Konoe Subaru. To my surprise, I heard Konoe's voice even all the way up here, as it passed through the entire school.

‘I'll be talking under the assumption that you can hear me. I've been trying to call you for a while now, but you never answered. That's why I went and borrowed the school broadcast system like this.’

“...!”

That damn butler. Borrow...she probably hijacked it. It's true that I haven't checked my phone in a hot minute, but...why would she go

this far...

‘...I heard everything from the young lady.’

With these words, everything made sense. Suzutsuki apparently caught up to Konoe, and told her about Usami, and everything.

‘Jirou...I bet you must hate me now.’

...Hate her? What is she talking about? I’m the one who deserves to get all the hate.

‘...I’m sorry. Please, forgive me. After hearing about everything from the young lady, I realized that I was wrong...that I had the wrong idea. You were doing all of this for my sake right, Jirou. And yet, I...I went ahead and said something like that to you...’ Konoe explained with a quivering voice.

No doubt about it, Konoe—is crying again.

‘But, after I said that, I immediately regretted it...’ Even though her voice was about to disappear, she desperately kept on talking. ‘I...I thought I lost someone important to me again. When I think of us never being able to talk together, or eat lunch together, I get so sad I can’t take it. Even after hearing about everything from the young lady, I knew that what I had done was irreversible, so I wanted to apologize as quickly as possible...’

...Please, just stop. What is this? I’m the one at fault, it’s all because I didn’t tell you the truth from the start. So...why are you so desperately apologizing.

‘That’s why...if you can hear my voice...Please come meet me.’ She breathed heavily, and even so continued. ‘I...I know that this is a selfish request. But...I want to apologize...make up with you...and go back to being friends, so...So...!’

There, the teary voice cut off, and the broadcast ended. Suzutsuki probably judged that any more than this would only be dangerous, and forcefully made her stop. But...

“—!”

That was more than enough. I could feel the strength return to my fingers. After all, I needed to hurry and meet Konoe as quickly as possible. Can't make her cry any more than this, you know? Not to mention...

"—Hear me out, Usami." I desperately ignored my gynophobia flaming up, and called out to the girl.

Naturally, she gave me no response. Even so, I continued.

"You promised me, right? When I treated you to some food at the stalls, you said that you'd make some homemade cooking for me. You still haven't fulfilled that promise, remember?"

"....."

"You're supposed to be good at cooking, right? Then, treat me to some. No, after everything that's happened, one time isn't enough. You better keep that promise going forever and ever."

I knew that I was asking for the impossible, but this is the best that I could come up with in the heat of the moment. I don't want Usami to die. She resembled Konoe too much, back when I just met her, how she wanted to make friends, but couldn't. That's why I can't leave her alone. I want to protect her, no matter what it takes.

"For that, I'll do anything. If I can continue to eat your food, I'll do whatever you want me to do. I'll hear you out with whatever problem you may have. I'll become your friend. I might not be special, and just your average guy but...even I can do that!"

"....."

"That's why...don't say you're tired anymore! Fulfill your promise! What good is a promise if you don't keep it!? I need you to fulfill that promise, I can't do it on my own! Don't just go thinking nobody needs you when I'm right here! Don't just try to leave me behind when I still need you!"

".....!"

It felt like I heard a deep sigh, followed by a long silence. Eventually,

a voice followed.

“...Hey, was what you said just now...the truth?” Usami asked with a quivering voice, desperately continuing. “W-Will you really...become my friend?”

“Yeah, of course.”

“But...I’m not fun to have around. Will you really become my friend? Will you really...make me needed?” The girl moved her lips, as tears came streaming down her cheeks.

I nodded, and responded brimming with confidence.

“Yeah, I’ll be your friend. That’s why, have some faith in me, okay.”

“.....” Usami grew silent yet again, and pondered on her next words. “...Stupid chicken.” She called out my name. “I will...lie to you now. It’s a white lie, but if you were to put faith in me, just a tiny bit, then...believe in this lie.” She explained with anxiety in her voice.

“Yeah.” I nodded.

“—I...don’t want to die after all. I want to change like Subaru-sama, so...please...save me...” She declared with a voice about to disappear.

Those are her honest feelings. She’s not lying, she truly put some faith in me. She probably tried her hardest to convey her true feelings, despite having the disposition that she can’t become honest with herself. As proof of that, Usami’s open hand grabbed my arm. Of course, I could only answer that trust, and tightly grasped that palm, stronger than ever.

Chapter 6: Farewell, Subaru-sama.

“Morning, Jirou.”

The following day after the school festival, after being woken up sparta-style by Kureha, I made my way to school, and ran into Konoe on the way there. Or rather, it seemed like she had been waiting for me.

“...Yo. What’s up, not going to school with Suzutsuki?”

“Yeah. She warned me that you might leak my secret, and told me to watch over you.”

“.....”

That Devil Suzutsuki again, she’s probably trying to be considerate here, right. Annoys me even more. It might just start snowing now, or the world might end.

After the events on that rooftop, Konoe and I managed to make up. The second we met, we both equally apologized, and Konoe kept crying the entire time. Not to mention that her apology was broadcasted to the whole school, so some secret assassins of the [S4] came after me to punish me for making Subaru-sama cry. Even so, we somehow managed to make up...and got back to being friends. However...

“.....”

Now, neither of us said anything, as we’re just silently walking along the street. So awkward! How do I say this, because we just went through a fight yesterday, it’s clear that we’re extremely conscious of each other. Not to mention that whole incident with the first kiss. But...regarding that incident, it’s clearly all my fault.

After all, if I had just explained everything at the animal cafe,

nothing of that would have happened, and Konoe didn't have to cry like that. That's why I want to be the first one to take a step closer to her right now, but...

"Ah, morning, stupid chicken."

Suddenly, an impact shook my body. It was a bike, which bumped into me at a relatively slow speed.

"...! You wench, what are you doing this early in the morning?!" I somehow managed to correct my posture after leaning forwards, and screamed in anger.

"So annoying. This is called skinship, okay. Just another gentle greeting in the morning."

Twintails glittered in the morning sun. Taking off her helmet, Usami Masamune said something outrageous like it was the most normal thing in the world. What kind of skinship is this supposed to be? Are you my little sister? I'll only allow extreme physical violence when it's someone from my family.

"...Hmpf."

The second Konoe saw Usami, she narrowed her eyebrows. Maybe she doesn't think too well of her? Well, Usami pretty much caused the entire incident, I guess. That's probably why Konoe and Usami were glaring at each other in silence...Oh crap, maybe I should try and run away? I feel like there's a hellish fight about to break out here. In the worst case scenario, I have to at least protect this town.

"—I like you, Subaru-sama."

Suddenly, without any warning, Usami suddenly said that.

""Huh?"" Two voices overlapped, naturally belonging to me and Konoe.

However, Usami completely ignored us, and continued.

"No, that's not it. I've liked you for a while, Subaru-sama. However, that's over now. My first love ended right here. I just wanted to tell

you and get over it.” Usami explained with a fresh expression.

...Ahh, I get it. This must be her way of dealing with things. She would stop admiring Subaru-sama, stop seeing herself in the isolated prince. Instead, she would go her own way, and be needed because it was her.

“.....”

It’s fine. I’m sure you can change. After all, not even Konoe managed to change on her own. A single person can never break out of solitude. That’s right, if you have friends, they can help you with that. Even if you’re lost, they can push your back.

“Then, I’ll be going on ahead. I thought of showing up for club practice for once.” Usami grabbed the throttle of her bike, and smiled with a refreshed smile.

The engine started revving up. In the midst of that, with a voice about to disappear, she spoke up.

“—I’ll heal you.”

“Huh?”

“Your gynophobia. I’m telling you that I’ll help you fix that. It’s almost summer break, so we’ll have lots of time. I’ll save you from the path of BL and gayness.”

“.....”

“Not to mention...You’re actually troubled, right? That’s why I’m going to help you. After all...” She paused for a moment. “We’re friends!” She forcefully grabbed my finger, and said these words with a pinky promise.

This is a way for friends to exchange a promise.

“Also...call me by my given name.”

“Huh?”

“L-Like I said, I want you to call me by my given name...Call me Masamune. Since we’re friends, that much is normal, right?”

“Normal...”

This is pretty embarrassing, you know. The only two girls I call by their first names are Kureha and Nakuru, but they’re little sister and junior.

“Come on, hurry up.” Usami urged me with a sharp voice as always.

...Jeez. Can’t help it then. I took a deep breath, and opened my mouth.

“—Masamune.” I slowly called out her name.

“~~~!”

For some reason, Masamune swiftly averted her gaze, and grew silent. Not to mention that her cheeks were beet red...T-This nasty rabbit, she’s actually embarrassed now. Not even knowing how embarrassed I feel...

“Maybe I should call you Usami after all?”

“Wha...” Masamune’s eyes shot towards me. “Y-You idiot! I definitely won’t forgive you if you do that!” She pouted.

...Well, can’t help it then. But, it’s not all bad. If this is the sign that she thinks of me as her friend, then...

“...Hey.”

There, Masamune started fidgeting with her fingers in front of her chest, and muttered with a faint voice.

“...One more time...”

“...Huh?”

“A-As I said...call me Masamune one more time.”

“...Masamune.”

“~~~!”

“Masamune, Masamune, Masamune...”

“~~~~~! Idiot! Stupid chicken! You don’t need to overdo it !”
She started blushing even more furiously.

She averted her eyes again, muttering a faint ‘...Idiot’, and tightly closed her lips. What is this, you’re still not satisfied?

“...Stupid chicken.”

There, Masamune looked up at me with a cute smile that almost had me entranced.

“—See you later!”

She must have felt embarrassed to be called by her name, or happy all the same, but after sharing a promise that we’d see each other again, she drove off like the wind.



“...Still.”

She'll help me fix it, huh...That was a pretty one-sided declaration. I mean, it's my fault, but...now things just turned even more messy I feel like. But even so...

“...That nasty rabbit.”

As I thought—that charming smile fits her much better than anything else. As I watched the bike drive off, that thought filled my head. It's getting close towards the end of June. Just as Masamune said, summer break is about to begin...

“...Jirou.”

Faintly beneath the sound of the engine, I heard Konoe's worried mutter next to me.

“We're...friends as well, right?”

“Yeah, of course.”

When I gave her an immediate response, she showed a relieved smile, and started walking with a nod. So that I won't fall behind, I started walking myself...Still, summer break, huh. I feel like things will get much more noisy compared to before.

Konoe Subaru, Suzutsuki Kanade, Sakamachi Kureha, and now even Usami Masamune: We have a crossdressing butler, a rich lady, my little sister, and...an average citizen? There's no way things will be any calm with these members around. Also, I feel like that glasses junky won't stay still either...How do I say this, even though the school festival ended, an irregular event in my daily life, it feels like that was only the beginning.

“...Well, whatever.”

Although I might not know what is going to happen in the future, I at least decided to not live with any regrets. After all, who needs half-baked regrets. We all don't need that in order to move forward. And, having regrets doesn't make things better. The school festival ended, so...this is simply the aftertaste.

Afterword

It's been a while! I'm the guy who got hit by a light truck the other day, Asano Hajime!

Yes, I was actually wrapped up in an accident not too long ago. It happened right after the release of the second volume so naturally my editor came rushing with a 'Are you okay!? Also, why are you reenacting the ending of volume 2?!' with an awfully funny retort. Not to forget the beginning of this volume as well. However, I'm not as tough as a certain chicken bastard, so I hope that won't happen again.

Now then, thanks to everyone's support, we managed to release the third volume of [Mayo Chiki!]. This time, we had the school festival arc, with two new characters appearing as Usami Masamune and Narumi Nakuru, which means that we have even more girls now! More girls means more romcom, yes.

On a side note, the original script had the two be siblings, not to mention that Masamune was supposed to be Nakuru's little sister. However, this setting slowly drifted away, and in order to create a smooth connection, Nakuru's personality ended up as the way you saw it. But, I do think she still turned into a great character, yes!

Since I don't have many more pages at my disposal, I'd like to get into the gratitude session. First, my editor Shouji-sama, because I probably gave him a heart attack when I sent him the cover illustration. Please forgive me, and take care of me from now on as well.

Next up is the person who taught me the beauty of twintails, Kikuchi Seiji-sama. The moment I saw Masamune's design, I raised a scream in ecstasy and joy in my small room. Thank you very much for your hard work during your busy days!

I can't forget the head-of-editing Misaka-sama, all the people from the editorial department, the proofreader, the designer, everybody

involved with printing and publishing, and all the other light novel authors who have given me advice.

Of course, the biggest gratitude goes to all my readers who have picked up this book. It's all thanks to you that I could bring out three volumes of [Mayo Chiki!] after all. Thank you very much, from the bottom of my heart.

Now then, as a bit of a preview, the 4th volume will deal with the summer break. We have a crossdressing butler, a rich lady, a little sister, an average citizen, and a perv...No, a glasses girl. Mixing them together with our chicken bastard, I hope to put in a lot of swimsuit, yukata, and other tropical events.

And, as a final announcement...I cannot believe it! [Mayo Chiki!] will be receiving a comicalization in the [Monthly Comic Alive] magazine's July release, and will be provided by NEET. I'm very happy that we've made it this far, so please check it out if you're interested.

Now then, while praying that we will see each other again, I'll be stepping on the gas with no brakes, so please take care of me.

Asano Hajime

Credits

Translation Group: CClaw Translations

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